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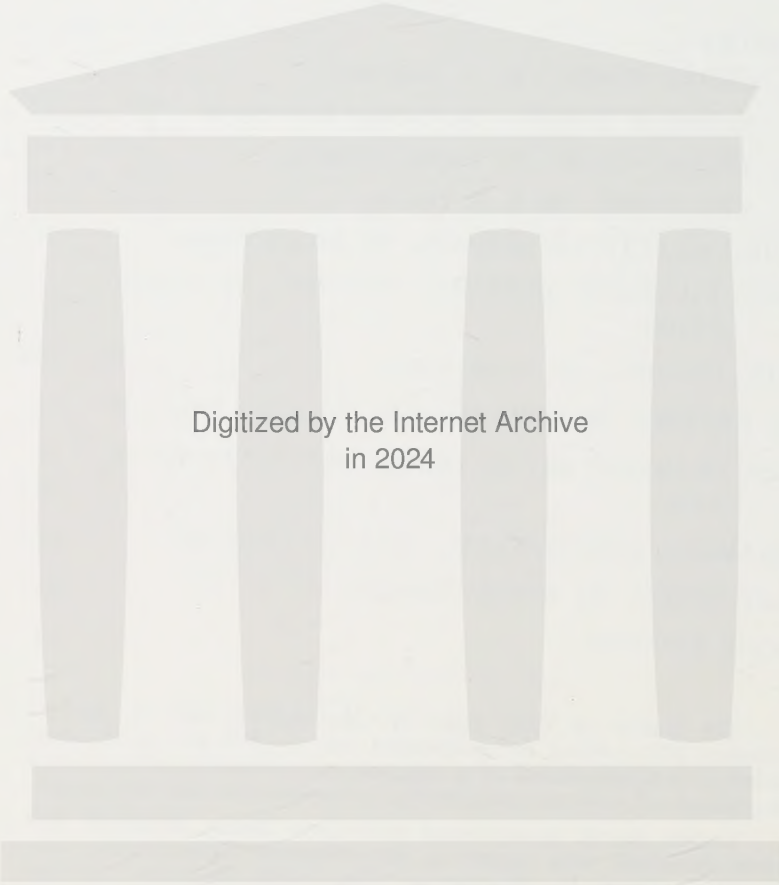
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# THE DUBLIN MAGAZINE

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*Three Poems by L. Aaronson*

## THE RAISING OF LAZARUS—SAXON RELIEF IN CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

THE giant Jesus, massive and alone,  
Master of multitude, the moment's king,  
Draws with magnetic fingers into bone,  
And thence to living flesh, lost Lazarus.

About Him mourn shawled women. And the awe  
Of watching men, who see the cloven day  
Darken with news that lies not in their law,  
Stiffens the air. They think : ' It might be us,

Dragged into fear and fire and care and bane,  
Brought to our burdens who might be asleep,  
The fear forgone for ever, gone the pain.'  
There is no joy : only the weight of God.

And Lazarus, who feels the harsh cocoon  
Bite his strict limbs, looks inward to his dreams.  
He that has seen behind the vacant moon  
Now knows what life is : life is now a rod.

## CALM SEA

THE water lies as flat  
As if there were no deep.  
' Here might I walk ', I think,  
' The easy flood '. So men in sleep  
Have spoken, and begat  
The pride that asks for good  
In every place, the link  
The demon makes twixt ' is ' and ' should '.

And yet if I could be  
 Towards the deep as strong,  
 And dare its fathoms, clear  
 With possibility of wrong,  
 Surely my eyes might see  
 The wonders that sustain  
 The crystal hydrosphere,  
 The source of tears, the fruitful rain

### TAILPIECE

AND if you ask me now,  
 What do you grieve for most,  
 The flesh or the ghost,  
 When you depart?  
 I answer: Flesh that is the ghost.

The cottony willowherb;  
 The distant leaves of the beech,  
 That sigh their speech;  
 The gossamer's heart;  
 And grass-bound flowers too frail to reach.

Delicate things that seem  
 Half feather half in flight,  
 And eremite  
 To their own art,  
 With secret shadow-words for light.

### O 'TARDY SPRING

*By Patrick MacDonogh*

THOUGH FURTIVE ice may lurk in shadowy creeks  
 Green summer lights upon the lake to-day.  
 The populous waters wake, emblazoned, gay,  
 Wave-arrowed by the swan's wake as he seeks  
 Escaping loveliness. Far fledgeling weeds  
 Rise to the measure of each venomous thrust



That gains him nothing though he throws away  
 Splendour and dignity ; she will not stay !  
 Lithe and serene she moves beyond the lust  
 That follows plunging, while with bawdy shrieks  
 Bald coot and waterhen change partners, play  
 Rude games of country love, and from close reeds,  
 Mocking and sly, the nodding drakes survey  
 This rowdy, rich, Hogarthian holiday—  
 Slowly the wound that knows no healing bleeds  
 In me, of all God's kissing creatures here  
 Alone and loveless. Chaffinch from the dogwood cries  
 Again, again, one word, and his small dear,  
 That mite of feathers in the thorn, replies  
 That he has all her heart and she is near !

O Spring, how spend this weight of love that lies  
 Unuttered in my flesh ? O tardy Spring,  
 If Spring at all, denying me, who bear  
 Knowledge of birth and death, this ignorant thing  
 That bird and beast and the fool primrose share.  
 The flower's life is sleeplike, yet, aware,  
 She turns, all eagerness, to take the bee,  
 And the slow being of the rooted tree  
 Stirs in his deeps when April's bawdy air  
 Bears him abroad. Waste that outruns repair  
 Destroys this body and will change in me  
 Enormous longing to an old man's sigh.  
 I am the idle branch, my budless eye  
 Blinder than cells whose immortality  
 Was never pawned for love.

But I must die !

### *Three Poems by Phoebe Hesketh*

#### THE TWO CLOAKS

DEEP in the shadow of a hill  
 Where black rocks thunder overhead,  
 The sullen water glooms like lead,  
 And metal lily cups are still—

Were they once poisoned ? .And are dead  
 Cold hands that clutched them underneath  
 The reedy surface ? Is this place  
 Enchanted by a spirit's breath  
 That blows the rose from every face,  
 Fills every ear with songs of death ?  
 I am afraid, for ravens sound  
 The notes of death's own trumpeter.  
 The hollow echoes rolling round  
 Must wake the bravest soul in fear.

No sheep come near,  
 The birds are dumb,  
 And trees and flowers forget that Spring must come  
 In this dark place . . . .

And now the sun is on my face  
 As morning walks across the lake  
 With feet of pearl in sandalled flame ;  
 And turbid water seems to take  
 Another form where nothing is the same.  
 For bulrushes are rods of gold ;  
 Each blade of grass is tongued with light.

And now two angels gently pass  
 Making the morning white ;  
 And two white deer  
 Come up to drink the morning here.  
 And is the earth transformed, or is it I  
 Possessed of clearer eyes to see the true  
 And beautiful anew ?  
 And are they angels, floating by ?  
 How came these flowers that never grew  
 In bitter yesterdays,  
 To blossom fuller than belief ?  
 The piercing thorn quickset with grief  
 Hides in the shadow of a cloud,  
 A waterfall falls long and loud  
 Above all sorrow's sound.  
 But waking I must shake off sleep,  
 Find what the day contains—

The shape remains—  
 The lake, the outline of the hills.  
 And seeing I can praise  
 The shining slopes but not reality  
 Which runs away the more my full heart fills  
 With treasure while I store my mind  
 Before the vision dies.

And whether all of life's delight  
 Is common day in angel guise  
 Passing in white  
 Before our dazzled eyes,  
 And whether all our doubt and fear  
 In hooded blackness must appear,  
 I do not know.  
 But of these cloaks I dare not choose  
 The one like snow  
 Lest it should melt and changing lose  
 The instant glow,  
 And yet I am not brave enough to wear  
 The black again  
 Knowing that shadows disappear—  
 I am not strong enough to bear  
 The instant pain.

### MIGNONETTE

MIGNONETTE, your name is far  
 Too beautiful for what you are,  
 Your subtle presence should be felt,  
 Not seen when garden perfumes melt  
 In one whole fragrance through the day—  
 Then you should hide yourself away,  
 But triumph like a queen at dusk  
 Outsmelling clove, and stock, and musk.

Mignon, Mignon, Mignonette,  
 What midnight pranks made you forget  
 A pink or purple petal to  
 Add modesty to cover you?

Though stigma, style, and ovary  
 Are parts connecting vitally  
 With every propagating plant,  
 What would your frilled, maternal aunt  
 Mrs. Resedacea say  
 To stamens flaunted to the day  
 Unhidden by a shred of shirt ?  
 And you have never worn a skirt  
 Mignonette, and have no shame  
 That bees by day and men by night  
 Drink up your nectar in love's name—  
 Provocative hermaphrodite !

“GIVE CROWNS AND POUNDS AND GUINEAS,  
 BUT NOT YOUR HEART AWAY.”

HERE on the busy pavement  
 The people passing by  
 Are bent on work or pleasure,  
 And have no breath to sigh  
 Or spend on worthless sorrow  
 Who measure life with gold ;  
 Though rich I am a pauper,  
 Though clothed I feel the cold.

It was at love's first taking  
 I measured my own grave,  
 For when it came to giving,  
 It was my heart I gave.

And not a world of rubies,  
 Nor pearls from every sea,  
 Nor God Himself can rescue  
 My heart again for me.

O why did they not teach me  
 Who learned so much at school :  
*To keep the heart within you  
 Is life's undying rule.*



And yet I have not sounded  
The sea floor of my grief,  
For fathomless sea sorrows  
Deeper than day's belief  
Drag me still further under  
The further I must go  
From those small days of wonder  
That shone those years ago.

How do these people passing  
Wear armoury so bright  
When anchorless I wander,  
And weaponless I fight ?

*Two Poems by R. S. Thomas*

SONG FOR GWYDION

WHEN I was young and the soft flesh was forming  
Quietly as snow on the bare boughs of bone,  
My father brought me trout from the green river  
From whose chill lips the water song had flown.

Dull grew their eyes, the beautiful, blithe garland  
Of stipples faded, as light shocked the brain ;  
They were the first sweet sacrifice I tasted,  
A young god ignorant of the blood's stain.

FARM CHILD

Look at this village boy, his head is stuffed  
With all the nests he knows, his pockets with flowers,  
Snail shells and bits of glass, the fruit of hours  
Spent in the fields by thorn and thistle tuft.  
Look at his eyes, see the harebell hiding there ;  
Note how the sun has freckled his smooth face  
Like a finch's egg under that bush of hair  
That dares the wind, and in the mixen now  
Study his poise ; from such unconscious grace  
Earth breeds and beckons to the stubborn plough.

# THE DIALECTIC OF DESPAIR

By Arland Ussher

SOEREN KIERKEGAARD spent his lifetime explaining, under a medley of pseudonyms, why and how he jilted Regine Olsen ; to this strange task he brought at once a Don-Juanesque wit, a metaphysical subtlety and a religious feeling which have seldom if ever been surpassed. Reformed rakes have always proverbially made good saints, but here was a saint so unnatural and introverted that he saw and sought in pleasure the Impossible and in religion the Unthinkable—a Tertullian in love who said “ I leave her because it is absurd.” What Regine in her heart thought about it will never be known ; we may suppose that she was not deceived by the Don Juan airs, and felt a fair deal of contempt for the *puceau*. The world, however, has followed the Don Quixote and has left the Dulcinea behind ; it is her tragedy and ours. It would seem to be man’s fate always to turn his tools to instruments of torture ; his latest and greatest mental wheel-of-torment is the Hegelian dialectic—that essentially true and inspired intuition of the German mind—on which Marx stretched the economic body of man and Kierkegaard his spiritual body. As Marx saw aristocracy proceeding thro’ class-war to collectivism, so Kierkegaard showed disillusionment in love leading by way of disappointment in good-works to the Higher Synthesis of despair in helpless and hopeless faith ; both the two pessimists, no doubt, took the optimistic “ one step further ” and assumed that the state in the one case, the earthly life in the other, would “ wither away ” into transcendent happiness—but who believes it was the rather-unconvincing happiness, and not the grandiosely-conceived tragedy, that intoxicated their prophetic souls ? And in terms of the subjectivism of modern man—the adolescent who has lost naïve objectivity and not yet discovered imaginative objectivity—the vision is true. The scepticism of Kant’s “ Pure Reason ” led to the compromise of his “ Practical Reason,” which in turn led to the solipsism of the neo-Kantians ; the rational sensualism and latent madness of the 18th Century produced the reformist Coué-treatment of the 19th, which has collapsed into the full night of irrationality in the 20th—if we may borrow a now dismally-familiar economic analogy, it is a downward spiral similar to that of inflation, deflation, war. The philosopher of the Renaissance said “ I think, therefore I am ” ; but if I merely *think* a thing I make it a dead thing, a leaf detached from the green tree of life—like the marry-and-live-happy love-concept

that Kierkegaard knew to be a dead leaf and therefore called up all the winds of unreason to blow away. The 18th Century had achieved an almost pure "rational" beauty, the beauty of a static death-struck world: a trim parterre in which the philosopher-courtier became elegantly aware of his flattered Self thro' his awareness of the Not-Self as "Object". With the turn of the 19th Century, the ignored "noumenon" had become impatient with its "phenomenal" stage-role, the puppets in the rationalist Doll's House kicked against their customary jerks, and the courtier-Subject found escape from boredom in becoming a philanthropist-politician—the Deus-ex-Machina of the Categorical Imperative uneasily mediated the contraries. By the 20th Century the imprudent Self had so far improved the Not-Self that it has in turn discovered its *An-und-fuer-sich selbstigkeit*; the devils of festering subjectivity have entered into the human herd, the stars that piously sang for Addison have become shooting stars. And yet there is a mediator between the Subject and the Object, and his search must be the task of the Coming Age, if humanity is not to be ground to atoms between its contradictions; he is what antiquity called the winged Eros—not the love of "brothers," nor the love of comrades, but the love of opposite and mutually incommensurable beings. Such a love is necessarily, like the Kierkegaardian love, an "unhappy love"; but its other name is the "gay science" of Art—Art which Kierkegaard, like Plato (great artists tho' they both were), never understood, or he could not have identified it with the backward-looking craving for illusion. That mediator is eminently a celestial luminary; he sinks in the Spiritual Dark with Kierkegaard's rejection of a static or "reasonable" beauty (in the particular instance, love-and-marriage *à la mode* with Regine), he rises stormily out of D. H. Lawrence's Sensual Dark with the discovery of a spontaneous beauty, but his essence is caught by neither of these prophets of darkness—Promethean sacrifices, the one to a father who cursed God, the other to a virtuous mother. The sensual ecstasy has its mass-equivalent today in the Nazi Voodoo-orgies, the ideal ecstasy has its secularised version in the Communist vaticinations of Doom; the Pascalian chasm has widened across the 18th Century dance-floor till it has pushed out all the joyous livers into the night. But that floor that seemed so solid was a mere temporary rationally-nailed-together makeshift; the cleft does not reach to the roots of the world; presently the innocent and integrated in soul will creep back into the light; and the new dance will begin.



# THE KILKENNY THEATRE 1801-1819

*By Hubert Butler*

IN the middle of the 18th century there was a vogue for country-house theatricals in Ireland. Henry Flood, the statesman, was the first to introduce them to the County Kilkenny. His house, Farmley, was the rural retreat, "his Tusculum" he called it, to which he withdrew when the strain of office was too great. His theatricals were simply to entertain his guests. No gentleman would, in those days, have appeared on the stage for any other purpose. Flood was an 18th century humanist, who accepted uncritically his position as a hereditary leader of the Irish people; in his own way he considered himself the defender of their interests and of their culture. When he died, in 1791, it was found that he had left over £5,000 for the study of Celtic languages and the purchase of Irish MSS. He must be considered not only a patron of the arts but also of Irish archaeology and scholarship. He was buried at Burnchurch near Callan.

A generation after him a more famous theatrical company was formed at a neighbouring country house, Kilfane. The intervening years had been momentous ones. The Union had followed the '98 Rebellion and it was no longer easy for an Irish landowner to be a leader of the Irish nation. A gulf had formed which the well-disposed could only bridge by philanthropy and good will. The humanitarian had taken the place of the humanist and the Irish gentleman, in his diversions as in his duties, had to play a different and more difficult rôle. The Kilkenny Players acted on the public stage and for charity.

They were oddly successful. For about twenty years after the Union, there was unexpectedly a revival of provincial life and culture. With the decay of Dublin and the abandonment of the great town houses, the country house became, for a time, not a rural retreat but the Irish headquarters of the family. The Napoleonic war was being waged but it was a war of professionals chiefly and the remote country squire was not deeply involved. They were more isolated than previously from England and the continent and they flung themselves with an unprecedented zeal into the life of their county.

Captain Power of Kilfane had served in the local yeomanry in '98; his brother was a rich and cultivated bachelor, who lived



in Kildare Street and paid constant visits to Kilfane. They were an extremely sociable pair and it is difficult to say whether it was John Power, who first started the Kilkenny Hounds, or Richard Power, who started the Kilkenny Theatricals. Both were the results of a united endeavour. John acted inconspicuously in the plays, and Richard rode without distinction to the hounds. For twenty years this collaboration, not in those days as odd as now, continued. There was nothing to show that John Power's venture would outlast his brother's by more than a century.

The Kilkenny Club was later to be associated principally with the hounds but in fact it was started by the Kilkenny players, to whom membership was restricted and I expect it arose from their need to have somewhere to go to and discuss their plans. Rehearsals were at the beginning in Kilfane.

The first season opened in 1802 and lasted four days only. Every alternate evening there was a ball at the Tholsel and every day there was a meet of John Power's hounds, which were kept in Kilkenny for the week. They started with two plays by a forgotten dramatist, Otway, but next year they were doing Shakespeare and Sheridan and after that an average season had fifteen or sixteen different plays, including three of Shakespeare's, and lasted two to three weeks. Congreve and Goldsmith were also acted. Every season had a prologue and an epilogue composed and spoken by one of the players. They were not at first very sure of their talents and so they emphasised in a rather lordly way that they were amateurs and acting for charity.

If you be pleased, we shall not be forgotten,  
If not it's Otway's fault, who's dead and rotten.

No vulgar motives stimulate our muse,  
But such as feeling hearts can ne'er refuse,  
To smoothe the bed of care, to wipe the tear  
From silent suffering, mercy brings us here.

Who were the Kilkenny players? Robert Langrishe, speaking the first prologue, gives the answer.

Who are we? That's all stuff!

You know us every one and that's enough!

Even to-day the names are not unfamiliar. Apart from the Powers there were near neighbours, Cramptons and Bushes, kinsmen of Charles Bushe of Kilmurry, the Incorruptible, who made

the famous speech against the Union, and who was frequently in the audience. There was Robert Langrishe, the son of Sir Hercules, the author of a witty satire on Lord Townsend's administration and an eloquent supporter of Catholic Emancipation in the Irish House of Commons. There was William Tighe of Woodstock, author of a still valuable survey of the County Kilkenny and son of Mary Tighe, the poetess. There were other well-known names, Rothe, Becher, Croker, Corry.

Many of these families had been represented in the Irish Parliament, some as supporters of the Union, others like the Bushes were passionate opponents. None of them could ignore the blow that the Union had dealt to the prestige and culture of their class in Ireland, and in each succeeding season the note of regret can be heard more audibly. The Union had made them provincials and shifted the focus of every social activity to London. There was a slow drain upon enthusiasm and talent, which was bound ultimately to dissolve their class, as soon it was to dissolve their company of players.

The prologues and epilogues are written in verse that is smooth and lively, even when it is doggerel and often it is witty and caustic. At their worst they were written by educated men, it is clear, to please a critical audience.

In their first season the players roused the fury of an Evangelical body calling themselves "The New Light" and the war was carried on for several years between the pulpit and the stage. The swaddlers, as they were also called, seem to have been Methodists who studied the Irish language for the purpose of proselytism. An imaginary Dr. Cantwell is satirised by Langrishe:

When alms are given, let me dispense the boon !  
 Heaven smiles upon my works and mine alone.  
 As if the canting hypocrite would say  
 There's but one gate to heaven and I've the key.  
 But we with mirth put by the weak attack  
 Retort in rhyme and laugh their follies back.  
 'Tis *yours*, grave sirs, to preach, 'tis ours to play.  
 'Tis *yours*' (he indicates the audience,) 'to succour  
     wretchedness . . . and pay.  
 And heedless what a meddling priest may say,  
 Make charity the order of the day.

In two years the Kilkenny players had started a fashion that was to last for nearly twenty. The Viceregal party and suite

arrived, the lodging houses filled to overflowing. In the words of a Kilkenny paper, "In every row of the Box Circle appeared lovely women of the first rank and family, in all the brilliance of full dress, the pride and ornament of our county and our country at large." It was said that mothers with marriageable daughters found Kilkenny next best after Bath for finding suitors.

The players were not shy of blowing their own trumpets.

The capital, once elegant and gay,  
Now owns our revels of superior sway.  
Each vapid man of fashion in her streets,  
Thus coldly greets the brother fop he meets.  
What? still in town? They tell me nowadays  
That we must go to those Kilkenny plays.  
The Colonel's gone. To-morrow I leave town.  
Come and I'll draw you in the dog-cart down.  
There will be room enough for you, you'll find,  
For I shall leave the pointers all behind.

The Apostles of the New Light were eventually routed —

Abandoned both by dupe and proselyte  
They vanished like the gloomy clouds of night  
Dispersed by sovereign sense and Ancient Light,

but the players were obviously sensitive to the charge that they were merely fashionable dilettanti—

Invidious rumour whispers it about  
That this our consecrated dome must shut  
That charity is but a stale pretence  
To veil our vanities and scanty sense,

and in several prologues by Langrishe and Bushe, the high ideals of the company were proclaimed. They spoke in the accents of their time, a generation that had been terrified by the French Revolution. But they were a curiously liberal body of men, very much more liberal probably than the fashionable audience to which they were obliged to defer. The constant theme of Bushe and Langrishe was that, since the Union, everyone of ambition was going across the sea to make his fortune and to amuse himself. Everyone was despising Ireland, yet their place was here in their own island and their plays showed that they could produce at home the talent to divert themselves and to support the less fortunate. They need not be dependent on what comes from abroad,

How grateful in this half-forsaken isle,  
 To call forth talents and bid Genius smile.  
 Tho' half our sons desert their native shore,  
 Such cumbrous cargoes let us ne'er deplore,  
 For in this trade you prove it who remain,  
 'Tis bodies we export and souls retain.

Here is how Bushe chastised some of those who went abroad  
 to better themselves :

The worthy Esquire sells his old estate,  
 Possessed with proud ambition to be great.  
 And what's his view of greatness? to be sent  
 An independent man to Parliament.  
 And, truly independent, forth he goes,  
 Of all the comforts his old home bestows.  
 See him in London to a Chop-House sneak,  
 To famish on a solitary steak.  
 Yet on each meagre meal more substance wasting,  
 Than here would furnish hospitable feasting.  
 Or see him round St. James purlieus straying,  
 With wondering eyes that wealthy world surveying.  
 And half his income for a garret paying.  
 Or at St. Stephen's on a top bench waiting  
 In fretful doze while statesmen are debating.  
 Unknown unnoticed save by some pert peer,  
 Who thus accosts his neighbour with a sneer,  
 " Who's that, my Lord? His face I don't remember.  
 How should you? 'Tis a Scotch or Irish member.  
 They come and go in droves but we don't know 'em.  
 They should have keepers like wild beasts to show 'em.  
 But wait a moment till he gives his vote,  
 And then you'll know his nation by his note."

And the following year there was a cut at the snobs who found  
 Ireland unfashionable.

But some I miss who say that little worth  
 Attend these sports, for they're of Irish birth.  
 Can Mrs. Coolan in these ranks be found,  
 Once known by Coghlan's more Hibernian sound?  
 For twice ten years in Clonakilty known,  
 She spent last season full six weeks in town.  
 Returned to Admiring friends I heard her say,  
 Readin' the peepers while she teests her tay.



" Kilkinny plays, O what a name I hear !  
 How harsh, how barb're to a travelled ear.  
 Things low like these with me are ne'er in vogue,  
 Who can't unfortunat'ly endue the brogue !  
 And then with conscious simper wonders tells,  
 O'th Lord Mayor's Balls, Vauxhall and Sadlers Wells."

Their motives were understood. Here, for example, is an appreciation from a contemporary paper, "The Kilkenny Chronicle."

In the present degraded state of this poor province of Ireland what can be more patriotic than to establish a point of attraction, where the influence of wealth and rank may unite in the encouragement of humble industry and the people can be occasionally reminded that all the gentry have not taken flight from the Country along with her independence and prosperity. Gentlemen of the first rank and attainments are here associated by one common sympathy in the cause of elegant literature, disdaining the allurements with which folly satisfies the fools of fortune and miraculously preferring books, thinking and conversation to dice, dogs and jockeys. Such men may well exult in the appropriate motto they have chosen for their stage, "While we smile we soothe affliction," and every good Irishman must pray that they may long continue their meritorious exertions.

Yet it was uphill work. It depended almost entirely on the enthusiasm of Richard Power of Kilfane, who had held his company together for so many years. After ten seasons, whether the strain was too great or they wished to test their popularity, they decided to close the theatre. Langrishe made the last farewell. It took the form of a eulogy of Kilkenny, which had always been a nursery of talent and enthusiasm.

What fortune's revolutionary sport  
 In time may bring to this her loved resort  
 We can't foresee but if a Poet's fire  
 May somewhat to prophetic glance aspire  
 This town may still remain our island's boast,  
 Nor mourn one glory set, one laurel lost.

This is no augury you may mistrust,  
 Though second sight, 'tis founded on a first ;  
 This soil for genius has creative power  
 And dreads not a degenerating hour ;

Here Berkeley, Congreve, Swift in days of yore,  
 Lisp'd the first accents of their classic lore  
 Here Bushe, here Flood were born, here Grattan planned  
 In early youth the welfare of the land.  
 One, though my sire let me record beside  
 With equal praise and fame, with greater pride,  
 These you can boast the splendour of the age!  
 These we can boast our brothers of the stage.  
 Nor shall you want as circling time rolls on  
 Minds meet to fill our abdicated throne.  
 But time must toil our vanity foresees  
 Ere any group be found more formed to please  
 More pure in motive with intent more kind  
 In wit more chaste, in friendship more combined  
 More prompt to feel and to inspire delight  
 Than that sad group that takes its leave to-night.

There was a year's pause and then so great was the demand  
 that they opened again for a couple of years. Then again they  
 closed. Waterloo was fought. Europe was free again to the  
 traveller. Richard Power went off to Italy and was gravely ill  
 in Rome.

The news of his recovery was celebrated by a banquet in  
 Dublin with all Power's friends and the great Lord Charlemont  
 in the chair. There were small pictures of Richard Power up  
 and down the table and the newspapers described unctuously the  
 jellies and blancmanges, which were stamped with the emblems  
 of the Powers and the Kilkenny Theatre.

By 1817 he was home again and the theatre was opened for  
 the third and last time. It had been enlarged and done up by  
 public subscription. These last two years were almost the most  
 festive. The crowds were unprecedented. In these years and those  
 immediately preceding many famous visitors arrived. Maria  
 Edgeworth and her father were there and so was Henry  
 Grattan. William Lamb, the future Lord Melbourne, Queen  
 Victoria's first prime minister, came with his wife, Lady Caroline,  
 in a last attempt to cure her, by a trip to Ireland, of her infatuation  
 for Lord Byron. Then, of course, Tom Moore came and acted  
 several times. He composed a prologue, recited his verses and  
 found himself a wife among the players. Perhaps their chief  
 triumph was that the great Miss O'Neill, the leading actress on  
 the English state, consented to come and play for them without

remuneration. A few years later she married one of the players, Mr. Becher.

Every evening the band played in the parade and the visitors promenaded up and down the quiet lime-shaded avenue, which then as now was something unique in Irish towns. There was a succession of balls in the Tholsel and Kilkenny Castle and in the theatre itself. To give an idea of the lavish scale on which these festivities were conducted, when Mr. Becher gave a ball at the Club House, a breach was made in the wall that divided it from the adjoining house so that for one night all his guests could be accommodated.

Perhaps it is time to ask: "Did they act well?" "The Kilkenny Chronicle" says they did and naturally we don't believe it. All the same the dramatic criticism that is recorded is exceptionally thorough and painstaking and is given much more space than modern criticism receives. Sometimes the plays were condemned, sometimes the actors were gently reproved. Not often we must admit but it is clear that the drama was in those days taken seriously and the plays followed with attention.

Less cordial criticism comes from Charles Bushe, the father of one of the players. He confessed that he admired the prompter most. "Because," he said, "I declare to you I heard the most and saw the least of him." But Bushe was the father of one of the players and was likely to be disrespectful. There is reason for supposing that four at least of the players were of outstanding capacity and would have made their mark upon the public stage.

The charitable purposes of the players were certainly abundantly fulfilled. In a single season more than a thousand pounds was handed over to Kilkenny charities.

In 1819 the plays at last came to an end. A prophetic spirit might have seen that it was not only the plays but a brilliant phase of social life which was on the road to extinction.

What was to blame? Bushe would have blamed the Union, Langrishe the fashionable snobbery, which made men look for their pleasures abroad. Perhaps the steam boat and swift communications had something to do with it.

Shorn of their canvas wings now vessels sail

Through pathless seas nor longer woo the gale.

Probably many causes combined to bring the plays to an end. The immediate pretext is given in the prologue spoken by Power and composed by Bushe.

Know then my actors are grown restless all,  
 Nor longer hearken to my sovereign call,  
 Some to strange lands a wandering spirit drives,  
 Some take to business, some have taken wives.  
 My Thanes fly from me and too soon Macbeth  
 Must stand alone upon the blasted heath.  
 But late my plaguey rogues, as if combined,  
 They had together a round robin signed  
 Wrote word "This season their engagement ends,"  
 Shall I expose them? Tho' they are my friends,  
 By Jove I will—

(takes a packet of letters from his pocket).

Let's see! . . . Aye, here in truth  
 Comes a sweet sentimental line from Rothe,  
 Dear Power, You know my heart . . . aye still this pathos, . . .  
 But this Excise Board . . . Heavens! What bathos!  
 And thus he quits . . . Oh, unambitious fool! . . .  
 The tragic sceptre for the dipping-rule.  
 What next? a note in folio signed J. Corry,  
 Who says, "Indeed he is extremely sorry  
 But that the linen trade now comes so full in."  
 Pshaw! hang his linen haven't we got the Woollen?  
 If to my orders thus he prove refractory  
 Let him improve his system at the factory.  
 There sports and toil the alternate hours beguile  
 And man, poor labouring man, is taught to smile.

He adds excuses from Crampton, Becher and others. The woollen factory to which he is referring is the Merino factory at Annamult, whose impressive ruins still stand upon the King's river. During the play season the proprietors invited a party of distinguished visitors to see it and gave them a handsome dinner. This very idealistic enterprise, for which Merino sheep were imported from Spain and bred in Kilkenny, and by which it was hoped to raise the condition of the working man, was then starting on its short career, soon to be ended by the fall in prices after the peace.

Richard Power died in 1824 and was buried at daybreak on a winter morning in Kilfane church. I do not know what happened to the theatre immediately afterwards but in 1838 the biographer of Henry Flood wrote of it, "The Theatre is now a mart of miscellaneous furniture without a vestige to remind the



observer of the famed amateurs of sock and buskin." To-day, of course, it is the Inland Revenue Office and some of the original fabric is still preserved. A plan of the theatre was recently sold at an auction in Kilkenny and every now and then some reminder of that vanished time comes to light: a programme, a prompt copy of the plays, or, more recently, a portrait of the fair O'Neill, then Lady Becher. In the list of acquisitions by the old Kilkenny Museum other relics of the Kilkenny Theatre are mentioned, but when the museum was moved to Dublin all track of them was lost.

Kilfane House still stands, untouched by time. The peacocks strut upon the lawns and screech in the lime walk and among the ruins of Sir John Power's kennels, while, across the fields, Kilmurry, the home of the Bushes, is enjoying a new lease of life under different owners. The generations, which succeeded Richard Power, made little impression on the beautiful library, which he built at Kilfane and where the rehearsals were held. His portrait as Hamlet hangs in the dining room and beside him his bluff brother, John, as Master of the Kilkenny Hounds. Opposite is Charles Kendal Bushe of Kilmurry in the robes of an Attorney General. They appear to have little relation to the Ireland of to-day and yet in their own way they loved it and worked for it. They do not deserve to be forgotten.

## MISS HUGHES

*By Peter Wells*

MISS HUGHES shuffled about the grey scullery, washing up under the gasjet: which hissed steadily—like millions of black beetles, she thought, running backwards and forwards under the table, thrusting their shiny bodies through the dirt-filled crack beneath the wainscoting like peas pressing out of a pod. She always mumbled to herself when she was washing up, as if carrying on conversation with the cups and plates that passed through her hands—thick hands they were, like peeled potatoes, that seemed to hold whatever they touched quite by accident. The cups shone in a row on the table, rather like attentive children being good while Miss Hughes had her back to them and swirled round the greasy washing up water in the

sink. Her heels, treading down the backs of her slippers, and her raw elbows, jutting out of the alcove in which the sink stood : were all that remained of her, as she bent over the lukewarm water, passing the tealeaves, the bits of potato and baconrind through her crinkled fingers under the greasy, swirling water : the rest of her was like a paperbag, tied at the middle with a string. With a great grunt the water began to bubble down the wastepipe, and Miss Hughes held the plug up while she brandished the big, woolly mop and wiped the sides of the sink : there was a final gurgle from the water, then a loud *suck*, and she emerged from her hole, shaking the mop to dry it which now, under the gasjet, seemed to bear a singular resemblance to her own head of scattered hair : and secretly, between herself and the cups, it was known that she liked her hair hanging about all over the place, because it hid her face from other people. And (equally singular) it is true that Miss Hughes' face hardly ever was seen, either, as the cups were aware, on account of her hair ; or because she always appeared to be gazing down at her feet : though it would be a fact not very well known, because so few people would have taken the trouble to notice Miss Hughes' face, whether it was there or not.

So it is not surprising that Miss Hughes reserved her intimacy for the cups . . . and, of course, there were other reasons, too. Anyway she put the plates up first ; and left the cups till last. It was all to do with her sailor—when she was young, years gone by : he had bushy eyebrows and rings in his ears like tiny new moons ; and had come into the birdshop her father kept, carrying a green parrot in a cage. It had all begun from there : he had brought her a cup with a dreamy dragon painted on it, one with smouldering red eyes that would have eaten its own tail if it hadn't been for the handle in between : and when he went away, and she did not hear from him for months ; and the years passed, and she still did not hear from him, she had fallen in love with the cup, which had stood on the marble top of her washstand, just beside the cracked waterjug, holding her little piece of soap. In those days, before she fell asleep, she would always look at her cup ; and did not feel safe in bed until she had seen it, even though she had long given up hoping the sailor with the silver ear-rings would ever come back.

The accident which happened while she was putting away the cups was therefore of a quite special significance : whether

it was the black beetles popping in and out of the wainscoting, or whether her arm was still in a violent flurry from the mop-shaking episode—she never could tell: she only remembered seeing the broken cup lying in two pieces just like the halves of an empty eggshell, on the grey hearthstone floor. Then the door had opened.

Of course, Mr. Charles Billinton never spoke to the servants, and why he should have come into the scullery at that moment heaven alone knew. He was tall and young, with aquiline features. His fingers closed over the bundle of bills lying on the dresser: and for a second his white shirtcuff and neatly manicured nails were very noticeable. Then he turned his head with a rather surprised look (which, in a semihumorous manner, he always affected when his sense of superiority was touched) and glared at Miss Hughes, and at the broken cup on the floor, and such a flicker of amused scorn seemed to quiver in his fine features, that the very air stood still for a second, and the bent alarm clock on the mantelpiece sent its ticks skipping in quick twos like the accelerated beats of a little clockwork heart.

This mishap in the scullery, and particularly its distressing conclusion, left a vivid impression on Miss Hughes who all the way home through the dimly lit street continued her mumbling: only this time there was nothing to listen to her, except the hissing rain that ran in rivers off the brim of her black hat: her round, bent and slowly limping figure had, in fact, as it passed through the dark streets, an altogether drowned appearance. She halted at last by some area railings that shot up like a row of pikes in the darkness: and still mumbling to herself she rummaged in a dilapidated handbag for her key: then lowered herself sideways, one step at a time, down the soaked wooden staircase, as if she were a diver descending into a pit of black water.

For she lived in the basement; and her front door opened out just where three dustbins loitered, paying court to all the cats in the neighbourhood. In the night air there was a distinct, sharp smell of decaying cabbage—pungent as the aroma of rain on foetid earth. But indoors she was more snug. She had a singed pink lampshade on the gasburner; a leatherette armchair, with buttons down the back, and a spray of horsehair shooting through the seat. Under the window, were a fern, its leaves like daggers rusted at the edge and tip; and a treadle sewingmachine. Yet no sooner had the gas been lit than Miss

Hughes, paying no attention at all to these interesting objects, and making a big puddle of water on her worn linoleum, stood and gazed at her tiny washstand where the cup with a dragon on it, very chipped, and without any handle, belatedly reposed holding her little piece of brown soap.

At this point, her mumbling reached its crisis, and words became audible.

'It weren't as if it mattered to IM—mumble, mumble—IM an is bills—sniff—orty e his : ow was e ter know little draggin wot a tremblin cum over me when I andled them cups—mumble—yew know ow it his : Ive only t think of yer dragginy eyes, an I comes on almost faint : an I appened ter ave one of yer liddle bruvvers in me and at the time, sich a darlin e was, an YEW knows ow I couldnt elp meself : but IM—sniff—lookin all hindignant : too stuck up ter say a word, e was.'

Then she took off her hat and, still mumbling, with fingers poking through the ends of her damp gloves, she began to fumble with sticks of wood in the empty fireplace.

'But wot e didn know wos ow crewel I ad bin : nor ow it nearly broke me eart to see that cup clean broke in two there on the floor, an think of me liddle draggin at one wot must suffer for the arm I ad done to is liddle one—mumble—must suffer—sniff—elp me gawd—mumble.'

She struck a match which made a tiny halo of yellow light against the black chimney. Her hands trembled and it went out. Her blunt fingers poked at the matchbox, and she mumbled impatiently, while two blobs of water gathered under the toes of her shoes.

'Gawd ow wicked an crewel Ive bin to arm my liddle draggin. No wunner E stared at me.'

And stumbling to her feet, so the matchbox spilled into the hearth, she went to her handbag and drew out a tangled rosary. Then kneeling in front of the washstand she began to mumble her prayers.

Next day, being Saturday, it was her afternoon off, and towards evening she put on her black hat, which had a wax flower in it, and drawing on her best woollen gloves, she climbed up into the street and hobbled to the church. Her black shoes



squeaked, and bulged round the corn on her big toe : and her hair hung like a wisp of grey mist over and around her face. The evening was still and very warm : in a turning opposite the church a crowd of boys were playing football and the ball kept going *plup plup* as they kicked it into the wall of a forsaken, bombed house behind the shell of which the sun was setting. Presently, just as Miss Hughes reached the entrance to the church, the ball came hissing across the sticky road and catching the kerb shot up at an angle into the air spinning a fine shower of yellow drops all over her coat : instinctively she clutched at her hat and stopped with a sudden little jerk that looked as if she were backing away. The boys sent up a great shout of laughter, and one running after the ball hooted :

“ Orl right ma—keep yer ’air on ! ”

After breathing heavily for a moment, and muttering to herself, Miss Hughes bolstered herself up and slopped forward into the church porch. Then it grew dark and cold, smelling of stone and incense : without hesitating or glancing behind, she gave a sort of push at her hat, which was her way of adjusting it, and parting the thick curtain, went into the church. There the candles were twinkling amid innumerable shadows that lurked under the big red and blue stainedglass windows and with which the shape of Miss Hughes mingled as a round blob that glided towards a pew by the one dim electric light : this light cast a vague glow on an image of the Blessed Virgin, at whose feet a vase of drooping lilies nodded their heads like six white prayers hovering beside the holy Mother. It was in this spot that Miss Hughes appeared, looking like one large black hat perched at the end between the pews.

All kinds of thoughts were passing through her mind : but she had her tangled rosary tightly twisted round her clasped woollen gloves, and floating in the dusky air in front of her was the cup with the liddle draggin gazing at her through his drowsy eyes : and as she looked at them, they seemed to melt into big drops of tears, but red like drops of blood : and she thought of Jesus nailed to a tree with a shower of blood falling on to him out of a thundery, purple sky. Then just as the tree had begun to sprout tips of red leaves, like kittens’ tongues, the cup appeared again, swimming in the air, and split in two and was lying like a broken egg on the grey hearthstone floor with Mr. Billinton

standing at the door giving his cruel, superior smile—his face cold and impassive as creased paper.

Just at that moment, the priest went into the confession box, and beckoned to her; and as she passed by the statue of the Blessed Virgin, the wax flower on her hat flopped up and down among the praying lilies.

## IN DEFENCE OF ROMANTICISM

*By Lorna Reynolds*

THE word "Romantic" is now almost a term of abuse, or at least of reproach; it is commonly a synonym for "weak," "extravagant" and "deluded," when it is not intended to convey an implication of depravity. It is considered identical with the feeble in conception and the vague, sprawling, deformed in execution. It arouses either antagonism or patronage in the breasts of all those worthy souls, "realists," as they call themselves, who, confusing the actual and the real, imagine that it is the function of literature to do nothing but reflect this narrow strip of the whole, and that it is a self-indulgence, "escape," in their own jargon, to lift one's eyes from the road of the present to the hills of the imaginary. Recalling all this, I, who am an impenitent Romanticist and a sober student of English literature, feel moved to undertake an investigation into the matter, to ask myself what in plain truth it means to be a Romantic, and looking into the historical phenomenon known as the Romantic Movement, or the Romantic Revival, to try to discover what impulses, purposes and poetic beliefs lay behind it.

But first one may pause to wonder why and how the word has deteriorated and the thing become so unfashionable; why the modish outlook, in the English-speaking world, at any rate, is that strong intellects, wide experience of life or even a moderate endowment of commonsense should inoculate one against such foolishness. One can point, of course, to the person who embodies in most authoritative form these views, who, when he lifted up his voice in weary but dutiful condemnation, was most hearkened unto. Mr. T. S. Eliot succeeded in having accepted the reactions of his temperament—and his temperament is that of a dry fastidious scholar, suspicious of enthusiasms of the heart and

idealisms of the mind—as canons of literary criticism. His moral zeal—and moral zeal, I need hardly say, directed to the right ends, is a very fine thing: it enlarges any man's stature—would like to see creative activity reduced to a branch of ethics. His authoritarian instincts cause him to exalt habit and discipline, which he calls "tradition" and "orthodoxy," against the force of the individual mind and will. Like most Anglo-Saxons, he distrusts metaphysics; he never digs deep down nor far back; his arguments are arguments of the surface.

But indeed Mr. Eliot was no ineffectual angel calling in the void in vain. He was listened to; he was accepted; he has a following. So greatly has he prevailed that to-day young men in England will tell one that aridity is a good thing because the opposite to it is vagueness! Mr. Eliot's mood was accepted, therefore, because it was the mood of most of his readers. The war of 1914-18 has been given as an explanation of this mood—that war had turned the world, even for the poets, into a waste land. But I cannot feel that this a sufficient reason. Wars are not exclusive to our century. Wordsworth, and, for that matter, Goethe and Hölderlin too, lived and wrote during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars—cataclysms that shook people at the time as much as our wars us. It is precisely the business of the poet to turn waste lands into gardens, nettles into flowers. The real explanation can only be that men had forgotten what the nature and purpose of poetry is—knowledge that at times slips silently out of mind, and must then await some spirit great enough to re-discover it.

And that exactly is what was being done in Europe, simultaneously in more than one country by the Romantics at the end of the 18th century. The Elizabethans could write poetry without a conscious realization of its nature. The poets of the second great romantic period in English literature were not born into the garden of Eden; they had to fight their way in, over the desert of the prosaic 18th century. If you were born an instinctive poet in that age, you had little to hope for. You were crushed, either by Dr. Johnson or by circumstances, or you were ignored. Thus Grey "was dull, but dull in a new kind of way," Collins ended his life as a lunatic, and Blake had no audience, not a human audience at any rate, whatever about angels and devils. For how could sober and responsible men feel any desire to listen to one who wrote with the innocence, feeling and imagination of a child?

Such things were the concern of children between whom and the adult yawned, everyone knew, an impassible gulf, a gulf which no one could be so misguided enough as to wish to jump back across. Life was life, and the same for all sensible right-minded men and "we must do as other people do," advised Dr. Johnson ; "preach the gospel and put down enthusiasm" as a Bishop of the time saw his duty to be. The 18th century knew little or nothing about poetry because it believed these things, because it was under the gravest illusions about the nature of man. The Romantic Revival meant a revolt against the accepted 18th century philosophy, a dissipating of these illusions, a re-discovery of certain lost truths, and a restored vision of what the nature of man really is, a vision which meant a reversal of 18th century values, the child being now seen as father of the man.

Now poetry is concerned with words ; it is a special way of using words. But to understand it we need to understand what impulse leads to this special use of words. To approach poetry wholly from the point of view of technique is to reach very soon an *impasse*. It is important to remember, therefore, that the revolution in poetry which occurred at the end of the 18th century is preceded by a revolution in philosophy. Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, with the Preface of 1800 and all its famous sayings about poetry and poetic diction, was only possible because Wordsworth's mind had been pondering deeply on his own development as a human being, on the nature of man, and on man's relation to the universe in which he finds himself a living being in the midst of other life. We are sometimes given the most erroneous idea of Wordsworth as a "nature" poet, a sort of superior botanist who added to the usual attainments of the class the further activity of pretty versifying. The truth is that Wordsworth was engaged on a task of the utmost importance and difficulty : he was working out from his own development many fundamental problems. He was prying into the very heart of existence, and laying open the springs of man's power, his position on the earth, his relationship to that larger life which enveloped and wrapped him round.

What were the conclusions on these matters that Wordsworth came to, or, perhaps I should ask, what was the faith to which he succeeded in giving expression ? For in truth what conclusions we come to, though apparently after long and conscious reasoning, are decided by the secret compulsions of our temperament and



are merely brought to the surface by the deliberate operations of our minds, as water is brought up from the depths of the well by the bucket. Wordsworth's belief, which had been instinctively his in childhood and youth, had then failed him for a time but had been recovered and afterwards remained as a conscious, tested possession of his mind, was simply that man can find no sanction for his existence in his reason alone. He does not exist from a power within himself; if he tries to do so, he sickens and droops. When the reason is put to the test, is most wanted, Wordsworth tells us, it proves of least use. Man has to be sustained by something greater, ampler than himself, something in which he feels himself to be a part—a welcome part; he must be aware of the fact that there is a bond that binds man to man, making the individual not a separate entity, but a unit in a great interlocked whole of fellowship. This bond, Wordsworth tells us, is love, brotherhood. The whole human race is one brotherhood, made so by “mysteries of being,” and with St. John, Wordsworth would have agreed that “he who loveth not, abideth in death.” It is a mystery—no reasoning will explain it—a mystery which one must accept in all simplicity. But this is not the whole of Wordsworth's creed, and is, indeed, the part at which he arrived latest. For man, in his view, is not only bound to his fellow creatures: he is also joined in happy communion with nature, and the bond linking the individual to nature is also love, human love being in some way regarded as a mediator between the individual and the universe, so that if one fails the other does too, and if one be restored the other through it may also be regained. Thus man is no outcast in an alien world, bewildered, depressed, but even as a baby in his mother's arms:—

Along his infant veins are interfused  
The gravitation and the filial bond  
Of nature that connect him with the world.

He is protected from the injurious effects of anything that bears unsightly marks of violence and harm because shades of pity cast from inward tenderness—the tenderness of his mother—fall on everything about him; and frail and helpless as such a creature is, he lives an inmate of this *active* universe. Why? Because, Wordsworth goes on to say, “feeling has to him imparted power,” a shaping, forming power. The child, even at that early age, is no mere passive recipient, no object only to be worked upon. He

is active. This power, which has come to him through feeling, working out through the growing agencies of sense, creates even as it receives impressions. In other words, nature, which is inexhaustibly creative, finds an answering power in the mind of the human creature. There is, therefore, a profound affinity between the spirit animating the universe and the spirit of man. Both are essentially creative, shaping or moulding powers. Wordsworth is here ascribing to the human creature in general what other thinkers of the age pronounce to be distinctive of the poet. Hölderlin, writing of his own creation, Empedocles, says . . . "there seems to lie in his objective nature, in its passive condition that happy gift which, without deliberately and knowingly ordering and thinking and forming, nevertheless tends to order and think and form, that *formative inclination of the senses*." Wordsworth's conviction is that this is the way every human being first and naturally perceives; he is not a mere passive vessel in the act: he both perceives and creates at the same time. Notice, however, that Wordsworth implies that this power will not operate without the help of love. The child would not gain access to this "great birthright of our being" were it not for its mother's love. When the subsequent conditions of his upbringing are favourable, the child retains his first creative sensibility; an auxiliary light continues to come from his mind to bestow added splendour on what is already splendid. He walks with nature, the world which surrounds him, in a spirit of religious love; and Wordsworth tells us that for himself:—

High the transport, great the joy I felt  
 Communing in this sort through earth and heaven  
 With every form of creature, as it looked  
 Towards the uncreated with a countenance  
 Of adoration, with an eye of love.

The effect of this communion between the creature and the natural world which surrounds him is an experience of joy so intense that Wordsworth calls it "transport." Nature contains everything to satisfy the spirit of man: if the one is unsatiable, the other is inexhaustible. Man, when he lives in accordance with his deepest instincts, lives in a relationship of reciprocal sympathy with the universe which he inhabits, a relationship which involves constant creative activity on his part. Wordsworth, one might say, applies Berkeley's famous principle in the

active mood. For "to be is to be perceived" he substitutes in effect "to perceive is to create". And man for him is essentially a perceiving, a feeling and a creative being. The imagination, he goes on to tell us, is the name which is given to this creative faculty, this plastic power in man. It is a real faculty, requiring food and exercise like our other faculties. It manifests itself in many ways, but poetry is its supreme expression.

One is, therefore, not surprised to find Wordsworth later, in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, insisting on the representative nature and function of the poet. A poet is a man, talking to other men, one who knows what being a man really means, who understands what human life really means. He is some one who can give expression, existence, to what lies in embryonic form in every human soul. He can do this because he happens to possess in heightened, sharpened form the powers owned to a lesser extent by those who are not poets. "He has a more than normal organic sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, a greater knowledge of human nature, a more comprehensive soul than are generally supposed to be common among mankind." The poet, in other words, is not different in kind from other men: he is different in degree of quality, finer, more subtly tuned, wider in range, deeper in tone than the average instrument. The activities of his own inner being, his own vitality delights him, and from the springing life within he is compelled to create similar forms of life. "He is a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is within him, delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually compelled to create them where he does not find them."

"The object of poetry," Wordsworth goes on to say, "is truth, not individual and local but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion, truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals and receives them from the same tribunal." Here Wordsworth is insisting on the universal nature of poetry: it has for object not broken and isolated parts of truth, but truth in general and active, fructifying; truth perceived as such from within, reaching the heart as something to which its own nature responds, which is recognised as such on its merits, which by showing its own reflection to the heart, the tribunal to which it appeals, gives it

a competence and courage which then returns to itself as added strength, the heart of man and poetry mutually confirming each other, by seeing in each the mirror of the other. Poetry does this because it is the image of man and nature. "The poet . . . considers Man and Nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of Man as naturally the mirror of the finest and most interesting qualities of Nature."

Because his aim is thus truth, Wordsworth considers the poet as a sort of preservative of human nature, keeping man aware of his birthright, "carrying everywhere with him relationship and love." Poetry is the grand unifying principle in human life and human history; and here the passionate conviction of Wordsworth gathers the clauses together and sweeps them on to the great climax of the sentence:—"In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge . . . it is as immortal as the heart of man . . . the Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men."

This eloquent defence of poetry is also a passionate assertion of the unity of the human creature. Wordsworth is in violent reaction against the analytic philosophy of the 18th century. Man, he felt instinctively, was not to be thus divided and torn apart: he is a mysterious living whole, thinking as he feels and feeling as he thinks, creating and forming as he perceives, not a passive recipient at one moment and an active maker at another, but a being in whom these operations in marvellous way proceed simultaneously and who can only express himself with utter satisfaction in a manner which reflects this unity of his nature. Such an expression is poetry; and this is Wordsworth's chief concern with it. The poet is he who is most fully a man, who is the best representative of men. He occupies himself with what all men feel and think and experience. He speaks for men. His poetry is knowledge—the knowledge of the heart, which is as immortal as the heart. He thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men, that is, with the sympathy of man for men, not as a mere calculating intellect divorced from flesh and blood. Wordsworth uses these very words. He says—"I have endeavoured to keep my readers in the company of flesh and blood."



He gives his readers poetry, and that is flesh and blood, poetry and living human creatures being almost synonymous terms for him.

Here then is what the great man who inaugurated the movement which is called the Romantic Revival meant by poetry and a poet. Could we be farther from the vulgar conception of the Romantic as a frail being infinitely removed from real life, real men and their concerns? Wordsworth, the first, most introspective and most philosophic of the Romantics asserts again and again that the poet is he who best knows what man is, what his nature is and his relationship to the larger Nature which contains them. The other poets of the period do not give a detailed exposition of their faith but, if we examine their work, we find enough to show us that it is in essentials the same faith. The bond between the individual and the universe, Wordsworth tells us, is love, and Shelley talks of:—

. . . that sustaining Love  
Which through the web of being, blindly wove  
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,  
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of  
The fire for which all thirst.

Wordsworth uses for the strength, the power he drew from his sense of communion with nature the word “plastic”—“a plastic power abode with me.” Shelley uses the same word to describe the creative fire sweeping through the universe:—

. . . the one spirit's *plastic* stress  
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,  
All new successions to the forms they wear;  
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight  
To its own likeness, as each man may hear;  
And bursting in its beauty and its might  
From trees and beasts and men into Heaven's light . . .

Each uses the same word for the shaping creative urge that permeates nature, and has also its place in the mind of man, a “plastic stress” in Shelley, “plastic power” in Wordsworth, or simply our familiar term “imagination.”

But more significant than anything in Shelley is a remark in one of Keats's letters, because it takes Wordsworth's remark—

that truth is the object of poetry—a step farther, and introduces the concept of beauty, which we instinctively feel necessary to poetry and which Wordsworth had neglected. In a letter to Bailey in 1817, Keats, with admirable conciseness, states his poetic creed:—"I am certain of nothing," he wrote, "but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, whether it existed before or not. . . . The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream:—he awoke and found it truth." Keats is in agreement with Wordsworth's belief that truth is the object of the imagination, but he goes on to explain in what way it is truth—what the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth, *whether it existed before or not*. Keats has no proof of his belief: it is a blind assertion of faith, a pure intuition. When the imagination sees anything as beautiful, he tells us, that is truth; and such truth is truth, even if it has never been realised in the actual world.

To understand this leap of young genius, extraordinary in its sureness, we have to look for guidance from the great German poet who at the same time as Wordsworth was writing his *Prelude*, was wrestling with Greek art and literature to find out its secret—and coming to just this same conclusion as Keats, that the imagination leads men to the truth. Goethe, after prolonged and intense study, after detailed analysis, came to see that "Homer, and the Greek artists, had known Nature from within: they had known what her intentions were, even if in the actual world she was seldom able to realise these, and they had created untrammelled according to her law, so that what they produced was the complete expression of her idea." In other words, imagination, working at its greatest, in the most favourable circumstances, as with the Greeks, can penetrate natural laws so profoundly that it can enable man, through art, to make manifest the ideas of God more directly and more perfectly than Nature herself is usually capable of doing: it can give perfect manifestation to ideas that often lie unfulfilled in Nature, because of some inherent weakness in the particular form or some external obstacle to its development. Imagination is thus able to detect the intentions of the creator which in the real world are spoiled by accident or circumstances. This, then, is what Keats had an intuition of when he said that "what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth." It is ideal truth, though it may never be realised in

the actual world. And Keats was aware of this ; for he went on to say that it is truth whether it existed before or not. Goethe illustrates this by a concrete example. He takes two horse heads from the Parthenon, from the Elgin Marbles, and says of them :— “ The English, the best judges of horses in the world, are forced to admit that these two antique horse heads are, more perfect in form than those of any breed extant to-day. These heads date from the best period of Greek art. Our wonder and our admiration is not to be explained on the assumption that those artists were working from more perfect individuals than those which exist to-day. The reason is rather that they had, with the progress of time and art, themselves become something, so that they brought an inner greatness of spirit to their observation of nature.” They had, in fact, through their imagination, penetrated the secret intentions of nature, and created something which might have been, but never was realised in nature. Eckermann reports Goethe in old age as saying to him that anyone who wants to create something great must, like the Greeks, bring his internal development to such a point that he can raise the faulty reality of nature to the height of his own spirit.

Thus the rôle of the artist is to transform into reality what in nature has remained as a mere intention. Imagination, therefore, deals with the possible, in this sense of a perfecting of what is. Imagination is more real than “ reality,” and imagination is true ; and a great work of art attains this truth, a thing of which as readers, unsophisticated readers, we are all aware, though it may be subconsciously.

Imagination, moreover, is a faculty in man which requires food. Not only the deliberate artist must use his imagination, but all of us, though, perhaps, in a less active way than the artist, need to exercise it. Wordsworth knew this :—

Dumb yearnings, hidden appetities, are ours,  
And they must have their food—

He tells us, and goes on to say that Tales of Araby, legends and romances, “ fictions, for ladies of their love, devised, By youthful squires,” all these are evidence of the gracious spirit that presides over the earth and the heart of man, and makes him desire something other than the merely utilitarian, something that just delights and has no further use. Before we learn “ to live in

reconcilement with our stunted powers," as children, we bless these forgers of daring tales :—

“ then we feel  
With what and how great might we are in league,  
Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,  
An empire, a possession . . . ”

As children we were all artists ; we all delighted in the free exercise of the imagination, but that same delight remains with the poet, informing his whole outlook on existence. For most other adults the intellect, with its tendency to abstraction, and the sense of morality gradually confines this play of imagination. By the time young people have reached undergraduate age, they are nearly all much better moralists than imaginers, and a great deal of literary criticism in English is vitiated by this over-developed sense of morality—T. S. Eliot and C. S. Lewis, for instance.

But I must retrace my steps a little, to the point to which I had led my argument a moment ago. I had reached the Greeks in defence of Romanticism ; for, in fact, one must support the other, since all art which is art is based on truth, whatever the label it may be given by the writers of textbooks. That a flavour of rebellion and of revolt, of ostentation and display has gathered about the term “ romanticism ” is an accident, and is due to the fact that the Romantics lived at a time when the nature of poetry had been forgotten ; and a violent manifesto, a declaration of rights, so to speak, was necessary to open men's eyes once more. The subsequent great poets of Europe, the poets of our own age, have continued along the path pointed out by the Romantics : they have gone on to discover further and further realms of the human spirit that may be converted to poetry, believing in Rilke's words “ that for the most delicate and inapprehensible things within us nature has sensuous equivalents which must be discoverable,” the great Austrian poet and the English Wordsworth at one in their view that nature and the mind of man are bound together in an indissoluble union.



# THE DRAMATIC ART OF TERESA DEEVY

*By Temple Lane.*

**I**N 1930, Dublin audiences at the Abbey Theatre saw the first play of a new dramatist, Teresa Deevy. The play was *Reapers*—a title picturesque but a little misleading. It was a comedy, agreeably but not essentially topical, with a humorous ending in spite of grim potentialities. It introduced one character—a verbose waster—almost in the Molière tradition, and exploited quite unconsciously in the last act Molière's comedy-trick of a repeated phrase. (*Mais que diable faisait-il dans cette galère ?*). It was an "extravert" play, and contained certain gems of dry observation. A young girl remarks philosophically—

"I'll marry. That's the best in the long run : you're settled then for life, or if it turns out unhappy you can take up something with real interest then, because you won't be thinking of marriage any longer : yes, I'll marry."

It is the same young woman who later makes the following suggestion to her brother—

LENA. I've been thinking—I could turn Republican, if you like, and you and I could live together,—because really Dad is a terrible person to have to live with—

TED. And that's why you'd turn Republican !

LENA. Well, it's pleasanter to be on the same side as the person you live with.

There is a serious undertone. It is the waster who says to his son—"Flight doesn't give escape, no matter what you're running from—escape is in the very centre of what you fear." And—typical of this writer's later plays, especially *Katie Roche*—there is this dramatist's characteristic demand for, in one sensational particular, an "act of faith" from the audience. One must assume that the homicide narrated in the Second Act of *Reapers* could and did take place. One must concede that a man could and did disappear as completely as Fitzsimon of Kylebeg in *Katie Roche*, in attempted atonement for a moral wrong—that he could successfully dissociate himself, not only from the carnal sin, but from the name and personality of the

man who committed it. The world's great imaginative literature is built upon such assumptions. The Greek dramatists are their eternal exponents. Bohemia had no sea-coast, therefore Shakespeare "put one in"—and the geometrical term for this device is "construction"!

It was largely due to the discernment of Lennox Robinson that the Deevy plays came before the public. He recognised not only their own worth, but their importance as a vehicle for acting, and his judgment was supported by that of his fellow Directors.

The sunny mood of *Reapers* was never entirely duplicated, although *A Disciple* (1931), televised under the more appropriate title *In Search of Valour*, was still in the pure comedy spirit. 1932 brought the more sombre *Temporal Powers*. That small masterpiece *The King of Spain's Daughter* belongs to 1935. The last three plays exploit from divergent aspects Miss Deevy's typical theme—of which more later.

Memories need not be long to recall the sensation made by *Katie Roche*. The new dramatist was not only gifted with a special and original view upon character. She had a technique of dialogue which was—and still is—highly dramatic. Her characters speak . . . think . . . and then speak again. From the literary point of view, it is as if three dots were printed between each sentence. A judicious producer, Hugh Hunt, knew how to evaluate these pauses. I am told that when *Katie Roche* was first put into rehearsal—a play in which this tempo is more essential than elsewhere—the actors experienced some difficulty with the special dramatic idiom. But when familiarity came with practice, the effect was in a high degree momentous and impressive . . . or humorous, as the need might be, when time was given for the wise humour to be flavoured and shared.

*Katie Roche* and *The Wild Goose* both belong to 1936. The first of these was a judicious choice for the Abbey Theatre Festival, although it is doubtful whether the part of Reuben has ever yet been played as the dramatist conceived it. *The King of Spain's Daughter*—like *In Search of Valour*—was televised just before the war. *Dignity* (1939) was specially written for broadcasting and belongs to that medium alone. But then came a long gap, followed only by the broadcast version of that disquieting play *Wife to James Whelan* from the B.B.C. early in 1946, and—also from the B.B.C.—a new short play *Polinka* (founded on a short

story of Tchekov's by permission of Miss Constance Garnett) in July of the same year.

In this gap of time, concurrently with the cry for literary photography, a change has overtaken the minds of those who profess to know that ought to be served to audiences. As an external factor, a deep depression, accompanied by gales, has approached from the Atlantic. There are internal factors also.

To abandon metaphor : conflict in drama has been transferred from the minds of *dramatis personae* to the stage itself : it is explicit rather than implicit : its externalisation is accompanied at times by violence and vulgarity. This is the day of the quick appeal. The best dramatists were seldom afraid of melodramatic elements—life itself comprehends these. Shakespeare never eschewed them, and his work was the flower of a robust national consciousness at a moment when the theatre had a monopoly of entertainment. Miss Deevy herself shows a hankering after them at moments, and quite rightly too ! But a school is now predominant which derives in part from an over-sensitized national consciousness and in part from a supposedly transatlantic toughness. (*Katie Roche*, by the way, was a failure with the small cross-section of the great American public which saw it, a fact which means in terms of the play's artistry exactly nothing !) Within limits of censorship, our boundaries of taste outside the state-subsidized Abbey Theatre are as movable as matchboard screens. For the last decade, Irish literature has exemplified a distrust of the imaginative. The first editor of "The Bell" announced (in his first number, unless memory is cheating) that he and his colleagues had rejected anything that seemed to them "fancy-spun". It was the inevitable revulsion from the influence of Yeats and Synge, the law of reaction which shows upon the graph of literature in every country.

The truth is that Miss Deevy's work has almost as little in common with Yeats and Synge as it has with O'Casey. But the result of this realist movement has been the virtual outlawry of "dreams"—except when they are pathological, or when a Michael MacLiammoir, with his own company, has the courage to put on his own fantasy and fill a theatre to capacity night after night.

"Facts," said Coleridge regally, "are of value in proportion to their significance." Creative writing cannot endure permanently the clipping of its wings. The discrepancy between

aspiration and fulfilment—the typical Deevy theme—may be regarded by our literary godfathers as unsuited to a crescent national awareness. But the struggle between these two is older than recent history, as old as man's realisation of his limitation in Time, and with this it will co-exist. Culture and fastidiousness are both dateless, but not always in favour with, or similarly interpreted by, theatrical potentates.

Teresa Deevy's work is at a still further remove from that of our writers who profitably manufacture errors-of-taste for export. The fastidiousness of her approach, partly inherent, is reinforced by early surroundings from which all her plays derive—the Ursuline Convent in Waterford, the nuns with their names in religion making “sweet symphonies”—Mother Christina, Mother Cecilia, Mother St. Kevin, Mother Austin herself the musician. Trees surrounded the convent above the estuary. Down by the Quay, where the red-funnelled, deep-throated steamers berthed near Reginald's Tower, the older sailing ships tied up also, ships with fanciful figure-heads and romantic names—Zayda, Elvira Camino. (I think the royal Princess of a castle in Spain was named Zayda: she was never the stupid little wonder-gazer of the English nursery rhyme!) On the Kilkenny side of the river, elevated by green slopes into the approximate dimension of dream, a tangible castle presented its white *façade*, not de-romanticized by its irreverent local appellation, Slattery's Battery. Katie Roche saw the Waterford Regatta. In the hidden back streets lurked unimaginative cruelty and obstinacy like that of Annie's father, squalor on the fringe of which Annie lived and from which her fantasies released her. Is it to some early experience that Teresa owes the presence in two plays of an idealised human woman? Certainly when the bride never seen in reality by Annie stepped into her decorated boat, it was from Waterford quayside. That was the sort of fantastic pageant the Intact City could stage. There were soberer aspects of living: commerce and trade from which the cultured life, living cheek-by-jowl, was nevertheless distinct: the reposeful kindness and piety of an Amelia and of a Kate. It was the whole of life in microcosm. Nobody need say that the Deevy plays happen in a non-existent world. Admittedly they move on two planes, but one of these is Waterford.

Through all of them except *Reapers*, a pattern runs. They are studies of men or women out of tune with circumstances, who



attempt reconciliation by every means, generally by taking refuge in fantasy. They are not all gentleness! There are startling explosions of physical violence. Miss Deevy knows that it is in the nature of the stupid, as well as of the frustrated and puzzled, to hit out at something. Even the holy Reuben does this, in *Katie Roche*—but I never feel that Reuben has succeeded in integrating his life, he is still visiting his own sense of guilt upon his daughter. On the whole, however, the conflict is in the mind; only external symptoms are seen.

The Deevy plays evade labels. Sentimental, never!—female characters like Min in *Temporal Powers* shock a little because of their practical outlook. Romantic?—not in the popular sense. Idealistic?—assuredly, but with a constant awareness that vinegar is mingled with the myrrh of this life. Realistic?—certainly never in the groundwork, and when in the working and conclusion this quality inexorably appears, the reader is dismayed. Such is the case in *Wife to James Whelan*. It is as if the current demand for realism, shrill as a factory siren, had hypnotized the dramatist at last into giving us this dismaying study of a man, his own worst foe, who for sheer obstinacy and pride will always destroy his own chance of happiness. It is of course arguable that James is a romantic character, incurably the explorer, discarding the known in favour of the unfamiliar which may satisfy. But here Miss Deevy is logical: when to this temperament is added the hustling of the getter-on, there is peace nowhere. It is as great a shock as if St. Joan of Arc, at the instance of Pierre Cauchon and his colleagues, should deny her "Voices".

To outline plots is misleading, because a Deevy play is special in atmosphere; its mood is produced as if by a beneficent incantation. The dramatist's truth to the integrity of her conceptions is absolute. Nothing is ever quite what one expects. *Temporal Powers* begins with an eviction. Michael and his wife Min are put out, not by an avaricious agent in the 80's, but through Michael's own ineptitude in 1927. He, a dreamer insufficiently articulate to be a poet, is a bad provider. Hence his wife's distress, and his own attempt for her sake to act contrary to his nature when he discovers a hidden hoard of stolen money. The best feature here is the exposure of a woman's resentment, not against a waster, but against an unpractical character. This play of atmosphere has for setting the ruin which shelters

temporarily the homeless couple ; and the drama seems to move like other of the Deevy plays, in the peculiar three-quarter-light which characterises the landscape of actual sleeping-dreams. The unconscious minds of the beholders, as well as their conscious senses, are summoned to co-operate, to reject or endorse. Neither here nor in *Katie Roche* are all the intermediate i's dotted or t's crossed. It is a provocative play, on the whole satisfying in that a solution is achieved, without violence being done to the secret fineness of the dreamer.

*Katie Roche* contains that homely, diurnal character of unspectacular selflessness, Amelia—sister of Stanislaus who marries Katie. Dear Amelia, with her painstaking—"How very nice—now won't that be very nice!" even of something what will disrupt her life. Of Katie, the "vegarious", everyone who sees or reads the play must have an individual opinion. To myself she is less the descendant from wild blood than the eternal adolescent—all impulse, like most of Miss Deevy's characters, but that impulse good. She is unjustly handicapped by everyone's notions about her, and fears for her—except Amelia's! "I'm not *bad*!" she cries, and perhaps the word should have italics in the printed text. It is another piece which leaves reader and audience speculating, but optimistically.

*The Wild Goose* is a study of the restless, turbulent temperament—male this time—which can here be viewed in either of two ways : as the undisciplined type which cannot settle down, or as acting in unconscious obedience to some higher law which will not allow of quiescence because a greater destiny is in store, the fulfilment of which depends upon displacement from a present restricting environment. Religion and the ties of love and hearth fail in turn to serve as anchors, and in the end the wild goose flies.

It is possible that the one-act plays, *A Disciple* and *The King of Spain's Daughter*, are Miss Deevy's best work to date. Annie in the second is an extended study from little Ellie in the first, older and more haunting. Ellie has the same crystalline innocence as Katie Roche, working this time with comic effect, and more possible than might appear even in our present state of urban knowingness. When she finds the heroism she seeks in the unpleasing gunman Jack the Scalp, her threat to follow her hero over the world affronts and terrifies him. "Yah—maybe I murdered an odd man or so, but murder'll leave a man his

respect . . . I'm willing ever to risk my life clean but . . . I'm a RESPECTABLE man." This play is full of delicious comedy touches, and the minor characters remain in memory. Stasia's comment on the local stage "star" in London is characteristic.

ELLIE. Done fine—and took poison.

STASIA. Look at that now! That was a mistake for her, the creature.

As indeed it was.

Of *The King of Spain's Daughter*, perfect within its own limits, the late Andrew E. Malone wrote in "The Dublin Magazine", Jan-March 1936—

"Annie Kinsella, the daughter of a roadworker, lives in her dreams while actually under the tyrannous domination of her irascible father. . . . All her ideals are presented in the grand wedding which is taking place in her district that day. She describes this ceremony . . . she has never actually seen the ceremonial at all: she has dreamed of herself as the bride."

The colours which play upon her mental image of the scene are diverse as those of the rainbow. No wonder she is accused of lying!—the bride did *not* look like that. Her father puts violent hands upon her because she is late with his dinner, but a greater threat to her private world is in the two alternatives for her future which he propounds like an ultimatum—work in the factory which broke her physical endurance before, or marriage with the dull, devoted Jim Harris, so different from Roddy Mann the attractive philanderer.

There is still a psychological escape. A man who could save two shillings a week for three years—for love of her!—would "do anything"! He would be a jealous man, a man who could cut a throat. The solution is found. Annie has begun to respect the faithful Jim, because for the first time he has caught the light of her fantasy, and she has become in her own eyes a romantic figure, living in danger. The "happy ending", although not stated, is clearly indicated. There is no dramatic virtue in indeterminateness which leaves the initial problem no nearer solution than when the curtain went up. That is perhaps why "Wife to James Whelan" troubles so profoundly.

A great national literature is not built upon reporting—the term "reportage" we eschew! There must always be something larger, further, than life. The face of the moon is familiar to the

most stupid, but the moon is out of reach. Love has been defined as friendship lit by passion. Drama is common life lit by imaginativeness—it is neither of these alone, as Miss Deevy is aware.

There should be great Deevy plays still to come, and the stigma of guilt is more than regional if we wilfully by discouragement silence the writer, now that the early adulation has died down. For that is something that may happen very easily, and if it happens the stigma will be national—also the loss.

Genius can grow irrespective of public appreciation, but to deprive it of such is to cut off a plant from one vital element—light.

A sensitive discernment: culture in a sense not exclusively linguistic: fastidiousness, non-materialism: the drama of perpetual conflict, not only between diverse characters but within an entity—can any National Theatre afford to disregard these? *Note on the Published Plays.*

Katie Roche, Famous Plays 1935-36, Victor Gollancz Ltd.  
The King of Spain's Daughter. Dublin Magazine 1936. (Jan.-March).

A Disciple. Dublin Magazine 1937. (Jan.-March).

Three Plays. By Teresa Deevy. Macmillan, 1939. (Katie Roche, The King of Spain's Daughter, The Wild Goose).

## DRAMATIC COMMENTARY

*By A. J. Leventhal*

THE CRAZY DAY OF THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO. By Beaumarchais. Gate Theatre.  
HAPPY AS LARRY. By Donagh MacDonagh. Dublin: Maurice Fridberg.  
Price 6/- net.

THEATRE. Spring, 1946. Bradford Civic Playhouse. Price 2/6.

THEATRE NEWSLETTER. Nos. 1 & 2. London: 20 Buckingham Street, W.C.2.  
10/- per annum.

Not everyone remembers that it was Beaumarchais who said "Ce qui ne vaut pas la peine d'être dit, on le chante." The phrase has received a new currency in a popular ditty with a refrain that croons: "If it's too silly to say, you can sing it." But the shade of Beaumarchais would shudder to discover that his own two best known plays, the *Barber of Seville* and the *Marriage of Figaro*, which filled the Comédie Française at the end of the eighteenth century, are now mainly remembered as operatic works and that when the titles are mentioned they recall the names of Rossini and Mozart and not his contribution to the development of French comedy, the creation of the character of Figaro, the culmination of the Mascarilles, Scapins and Crispins, his valet predecessors.



Most people have heard of Corneille and Racine but Beaumarchais is practically unknown outside academic circles. Yet he acquired more fame in his time than they did in theirs, whilst for a while, he eclipsed his contemporary Voltaire. We should, therefore, be specially grateful to Lord Longford for giving us the opportunity of seeing *The Crazy Day*. The Dublin audience—as indeed any modern audience would be—must have been unaware of the historical significance of the play, lulled perhaps by memories of Mozart's "Figaro ci, Figaro là, Figaro, Figaro," with its inimitable suggestion of the hurried and harassed valet. Nor indeed in the present production could one feel that behind all the comic intrigue was an arraignment of society and a rapier tilt against the tyranny of aristocracy. The reason lies, of course, in the difference between our own ills and those suffered in pre-revolutionary France. Listening to the play it seemed that an adaptation might have had a more popular appeal. A cry against taxation, shall we say, or literary censorship would have had more point for the ordinary man in the stalls who could only listen dispassionately to Figaro's admonishment of the "grand seigneur" who, to justify his nobility and riches, had taken no other pains than to be born. In this age of "Gleichschaltung," E.P.T., death duties and the like, the aristocrat is not necessarily a plutocrat and the plutocrat very rarely an aristocrat.

Figaro's complaint, likewise, that his intellectual superiority is not in keeping with his social inferiority is hardly likely to ring a bell of association in the minds of an Americanised world with the career open to the talents. Even Beaumarchais himself, in his later opera *Tarare*, changes his view and makes the obscurely born genius overthrow the king and himself ascend the throne.

Despite the outmoded background the comedy ran smoothly. Aiden Grennell, as Figaro, dominated the play but only in height; his legs and arms seemed to be in everybody's way. He appeared to be working very hard but his long speeches lacked gradation of tone. His was a brave if ineffectual effort to interpret the shrewd and resourceful adventurer of the *Barber of Seville* now become the bitter, if still gay, revolutionary. Maurice O'Brien was in his best period manner as Count Almaviva and held the audience fast while he was on the stage. Eve Watkinson demonstrated the versatility of her undoubted talent as Susanna for, in this part, there was no occasion for tragic or hysterical heights and yet she impressed by her soubretish gaiety. She overshadowed Cathleen Delany, who played the Countess, partly because the script demanded it but also because her vivacity was more efficacious.

Kay Casson's settings were as admirable as they were original, whilst Lord Longford's translation succeeded in giving an eighteenth century atmosphere to the comedy without being stilted. He is to be congratulated on his courage and public cultural spirit in allowing us to see this finely produced play which the ordinary commercial theatre would never dream of touching.

Every schoolboy, who has hunted in the larger Latin dictionaries for the untranslated words in the library copies of Petronius, is familiar with the story of the Ephesian lady who fasted and wept over the still warm body of her dead husband but who succumbed overnight to the charm of a Roman soldier. She succumbed to the extent of not only granting him her favours but also replacing the body of a criminal stolen from a cross which was supposed to be guarded by the soldier, with that of her deceased husband in order to save her new-found lover from punishment for dereliction of duty. Mr. MacDonagh, in his first

play *Happy as Larry*, published now before presentation, improves on this old tale by making two widows fail lamentably to pay the respect due to their newly dead husbands either by a new marriage or the contemplation of one.

Reminded of a Dublin printed eighteenth century collection of "Histories" called *The Matrons*, which contains the Petronius tale already referred to and others of a similar nature, I turned to the preface to find that the anonymous editor, in the mock-serious manner of the seeker for sensation-loving readers, declares: 'The more we are disposed to blame the levity or wantonness of those Widows, whose weeds are only a cloak for immodesty, or a lure for solicitation, the more we must admire the virtue and prudence of every Lady, whose conduct has been the very reverse.'

It is not suggested that *Happy as Larry* is a lesson to widows, a moral comedy for errant relicts; though it might be so read. The author, however, brings so frolicsome a mind to bear on matters hymeneal, without fear of offending bourgeois proprieties, to make any lurking moral purpose as effective as any romantic proposition by James Branch Cabell. The verse in which the comedy is written has an infectious quality deriving in its better flights from Austin Clarke's *Viscount of Blarney*, but sometimes it falls into doggerel. This may be effective on the stage where the author requires a farcical atmosphere. The book is well produced, Sir Francis Rose supplying symbolic illustrations. If the audience can stomach the Rabelaisianisms it should prove a popular success in the theatre. The glossary of Dublin slang, which the author provides, has some amusing definitions.

The third issue of *Theatre*, a publication under the aegis of the Bradford Civic Playhouse, maintains the high standard set by previous numbers. Particularly interesting is Eric John's article on the resurrection of the "penny plain and twopence coloured" sheets of the old Juvenile Drama in his contribution entitled *The Toy Theatre*. It is good to be reminded that round about 1880, Benjamin Pollock, the best known of the toy theatre makers, had among his clientèle such people as Robert Louis Stevenson, Gordon Craig, Winston Churchill, Millais, Ellen Terry, G. K. Chesterton, to mention only a few youthful enthusiasts for things theatrical. There is a very informative note by Thomas Walton on present activities in the French theatre and a well deserved appreciation of George Méliés, pioneer in the art of cinematography, by John Maddison. This finely produced and illustrated magazine, devoted to the theatre and allied arts, is worthy of support.

*Theatre Newsletter* is a new venture in theatrical journalism. It is published fortnightly and appeals to specialists in the theatre, stressing merits or defects in production, examining new plays from the angle of craft, originality of presentation and number and sex of cast. Nevertheless there is no neglect of the literary and dramatic value of the pieces reviewed. The information contained in these first two numbers should interest not only playgoers themselves but members of Repertory, Little or Amateur theatre groups. They may find that their own problems are shared by similar bodies all over Britain and may be able to apply the remedies that have proved successful elsewhere. Brightly and concisely written and obviously so arranged as to encourage active co-operation from those really interested in theatrical development and knowledge, this new publication should find many friends all over the country.

### THE SLACK SEASON.

A letter from a distinguished designer who wishes to remain anonymous leads me to think that in my last notes I did not make myself quite clear in my attack on a number of eminent neo-Victorians; or rather that my effort "o'er-leaped itself to fall on t'other." My correspondent writes: "I don't, for my part, see that one need hate one kind of art in order to like another; much less behave contemptuously towards artists who in their time represented advancement or at least change, and are not abolished by word of mouth." I agree unreservedly; and hope that I did not at any time give the impression that I thought or felt otherwise. On the other hand, it seems to me that is precisely what Doctors Bodkin and MacColl are doing, condemning modern art because it does not conform with ideas and ideals which, however valid they may have been in a former age, are to-day either invalid or irrelevant. When my correspondent again says: "To be able to draw is a discipline. A man who can paint an ordinary picture has to be accomplished to that extent," I again agree; adding, however, that the discipline of technique is only one of the disciplines of art. A glance at the competition page of the *New Statesman and Nation* will show how fundamentally meaningless pure technical accomplishment can be when divorced from the man in his time, place and circumstance.

Literary criticism, since Arnold at any rate, has always adopted this relativity in criticism. The art critic, on the other hand, is expected to forego it even when dealing with contemporary art. As well as that, the literary critic, in dealing with contemporary writing, admittedly adopts a scale of values: A work is judged in its own category. On certain levels of criticism only that which appears important is dealt with at all. In art, on the other hand, there is a tendency to ignore categories and to ask the critic to judge every picture as a combination of a technical *tour de force* and an essay in entertainment. In a quarterly, criticism, unless selective, would be meaningless. Therefore it is frequently necessary to ignore even the most delightful of such entertainments when they appear unrelated to any serious purpose, when they are repetitions and imitations, and not advances. By corollary it is necessary to explain why the technically accomplished is ignored in favour of the experimental, tentative and even slapdash, when the latter is saying something, even negatively, of the world to-day; or even when it discovers a new aesthetic beauty in the revolt from traditional technique. No critic is infallible; and it is possible that the merely eccentric may often be confused with the new, or the traditional with the old-fashioned. These dangers exist for anyone who tries to judge painting, not merely as the accomplishment of the few for the entertainment of the many, but as a changing social phenomenon.

There were few exhibitions during the summer and none of any very great interest. The Paintings of the late William Crampton Gore, R.H.A., at the Victor Waddington Galleries show him as a delightfully urbane painter, with a rich sense of colour somewhat reminiscent of Pissarro, and at times of Osborne, especially in his interiors. There is a rightness and absence of strain in his composition which frequently produces a personal lyric in pictures like *Bridge, Toledo* and *Sunset, Toledo Bridge. Autumn, Co. Wicklow*, and *Sunnybank near Kilbride* show him at his best as a colourist. His *Salon Vert*, a very lovely interior, has a quiet and comfortable charm achieved through warmth of colour and smooth, apparently effortless painting.



The Dublin Painters' Exhibition at their Gallery in Stephen's Green was somewhat above their average in the number of interesting pictures hung. I liked particularly Sylvia Cooke-Collis' *Cathedral Square, Waterford*, for its cool and original colour, and a harmonic interplay of line in the trees against the static masonry in the background. Some rather fussy brushwork in the foreground detracted slightly from the pleasure of the whole. Norah McGuinness, in *The Yellow House, Leixlip*, and *Ellis Quay*, shows a fine, dramatic sense of composition; but the unvarying sameness with which she uses a restricted palette produces an effect of monotony, to which her bold, unmodulated brushwork adds not a little. Anne Yeats betrays an almost Oriental sensitivity to form in two lovely sketches, *Cliffs at Malinbeg* and *Strand, West Donegal*. Thurloe Connolly, in his *Old House near Oldbawn*, seems to have fallen completely for that gloomy English Romanticism which Piper has revived from the eighteenth century. The Rev. J. P. O'Hanlon has a light, almost topical sense of humour; he seems to have settled down to the cultivation of his sense of decor.

The *Taspántas de Phictiúirí a Bhaineas le Stóir na hEireann* in connection with the Davis and Young Ireland Centenary celebrations, held in the National College of Art, contained a very large proportion of pictures which were painted as set-pieces for the occasion. Favourite subjects for reconstruction appear to have been the Famine, the Burning of the Four Courts in 1922 and the Howth gun-running, the exhibition providing several versions of each. Charles Lamb's *Úcras*, is, to my mind, the best of the Famine pictures. The Colour alone expresses the mingled terror and despair of that procession of the hungry moving towards a livid sea. Cecil Salkeld's *Young Ireland at the Howth Gun-Running*, while it has good colour and some fine painting, is careless in detail. Norah McGuinness' *The Four Courts* has that bold dramatic quality, again with the reservations mentioned above. Louis le Brocquy's *Connemara Cottages Abandoned during the Famine* is good abstract painting; but in this context seems unrelated. Maurice McGonigal's *An Ghorta* is a fine picture in which a large number of figures are beautifully grouped in a landscape of shimmering light; the centripetal arrangement of the figures suggests the coming flight.

The most ambitious work hung is Sean Keating's *Republican Court*, 1921, a magnificent piece of painting with brilliant detail, fine characterisation and rich colour; but which fails in a lack of uniform treatment in the different figures and further in the clumsiness of the grouping. As an example of perfection in "still-life" I would take the painting of the Bible and the packet of torn letters on the table. Three of the figures are lovely portrait studies; in relation to them the central figure is out of proportion and not treated with the same finesse. Pastel studies for the heads, which appear on the screen under the title, *30 Years After* show Keating at his effortless best as a draughtsman and a painter of "character."

In addition to contemporary work the exhibition includes a selection from the best historical pictures of the past century; Orpen's lovely, rich-toned portrait of Michael Davitt; John Butler Yeats' portraits of John O'Leary and Douglas Hyde, which show what a fine portrait painter he was; Lavery's tragic *Southwark Cathedral*, as well as his less commendable *The Blessing of the Colours*. And I was glad to find again two of Jack B. Yeats' finest pictures: *The Funeral of Harry Boland* and *Bachelor's Walk—in Memory*, which I think the two most genuinely moving pictures here.



## BOOK REVIEWS

COLLECTED POEMS. By Vivian Locke Ellis. Faber & Faber. 7s. 6d.

THE VOYAGE AND OTHER POEMS. By Edwin Muir. Faber & Faber. 6s.

FLOWING WATERS. By Patric Stevenson. Resurgam Books. 4s. 6d.

The following reviews which should have appeared with those of Roy Campbell's "Talking Bronco" and Laurence Durrell's "Cities, Plains and Peoples" were omitted from the last number of the Dublin Magazine through an error.

The *Collected Poems* of Vivian Locke Ellis, some four-score in number, are the "fruit of forty years' retired labour," and the individuality, the privateness of their author's poetic personality is seen in their unity of tone and attitude. Mr. Ellis's first book of verse was published in 1903, and was followed by several other volumes ending with *The Venturers* in 1912. Since then he published none of his work until the present volume. The dates of the pieces are not given, nor can one say on reading them, "This was early: this is late." The prevailing atmosphere is one of quietude and, since one is never satisfied, they seem a little tame after the flamboyance of Roy Campbell and the luring obscurities of Lawrence Durrell. But, for all their lucid language and apparent simplicities, there are subtleties here to savour slowly and to seek out and taste again. They gain their steadiness in a world of changing social and moral values from a concentration upon nature and a search for lasting truths that lie behind the conflicts of men's minds. Some pieces are such as might appear over the signature "Anon." in any collection of seventeenth century lyrics, more have the flavour of twentieth century Georgian: all show a careful and loving use of English. Here is the first stanza of "Peace, She Slumbers."

Peace, she slumbers. What for rest  
Shaped so sweetly as this breast;  
What so dark and dreamy-wise  
As the shadow in those eyes;  
What so quiet as the air  
Sleep has when it settles there?

"Listen closely," writes Mr. De la Mare in a likeable preface, "and he can be strangely unexpected." It is well worth listening closely to these quiet accents that are "more of the spirit than the intellect."

Of the four Faber books under review I find Edwin Muir's *The Voyage* the most satisfying, both because of the nature of the questions it raises and because of its accomplished expression. They are questions which, in the absence of a strong religious faith must of necessity remain unanswered, for Mr. Muir is a mystic as much as a philosopher and is persistently occupied by the contemplation of the duality of nature and experience. The "covenant of god and animal," the paradox of good and evil as necessary to life, the conflict and union of spirit and sense—these he is always aware of, brooding upon, endeavouring to explain, since he accepts them, in symbol and image precise and solid. In the same careful and precise use of concrete image and symbol he deals with the immediate problems of social man, using an allegory so lightly accented that a hasty reader might miss, in such poems as "The Return," "The Escape," or "The Castle," not only the nature, but even the existence, of their implications. Hints of

spiritual autobiography in the legendary "Voyage" are revealing, in which after long sailing in lost seas of the imagination:

The crowds drew near, the toppling towers;  
In hope and dread we drove to birth;  
The dream and a truth we clutched as ours,  
And gladly, blindly stepped on earth.

The poem has a sequel in "The Myth," which recounts how after "the reveries and names" of youth had given way "before sure-footed flesh and blood," time passed until

Consolidated flesh and bone  
And its designs grow halt and lame;  
Unshakeable arise alone  
The reverie and the name . . . .

Technically, Mr. Muir's poems, with few exceptions, are a delight; they are shaped logically and with care, yet they are fresh and original, and, while paying no respect to fashion, are unmistakably poems of to-day.

Patric Stevenson is a musician, an electrician, a bird-watcher and nature-student and an accomplished painter (his work is at present on exhibition in Waterford). This is his first book of poems and it suggests that he may some day become important as a poet if he accepts the significance of the title in a fuller and more serious way than he has yet done. Most of the poems in *Flowing Water* are nature poems, accurate records of close observation of scene or flower or bird, set out in a virile workmanlike manner. Sometimes the sex-symbolism he uses seems forced and unnecessarily violent—"unnecessarily," because his descriptions of things as themselves are so strong and clear. He has plenty of other sources of symbolism to draw upon. He has humour, too, kindly as in "Fox-gloves" or "Glow Worm Light," or satiric as in "Epitaph for a Sportsman." Nor are his descriptive poems all objective; man remains the centre of his world and the observer speaks of more things than are seen by the lynx-eye of his flesh. Here are a few lines (all that space permits) from "Gossamer";

So much achievement wrecked by one man only!  
It seems we cannot live a single hour  
Without annihilating, making lonely,  
Frustrating, wounding, life of lower power . . . .

W. P. M.

POSTSCRIPT ON EXISTENTIALISM and Other Essays. By Arland Ussher. Dublin: The Sandymount Press. London: Williams and Norgate. n.p.

Arland Ussher has already made his name in Ireland as the author of a very fine translation of *The Midnight Court*, and, in the field of Irish language and folklore, with his *Cainnt an tSeana Shaoghail* of which a second volume will appear shortly. Readers of this magazine are aware of his provocative brilliance as an essayist in a field which Irishmen, since Eriugena, have left severely alone. Joyce, indeed, touched on it in *Portrait of the Artist*, before going on to erect his "universal system" through the medium of another and more secular

"word." In Ireland philosophy is drowned in the polemics of local politics; ideas are rigidly subjected to the tyranny of a Romantic parochialism; or, more generally, just not understood. Ussher is therefore, in this book, the black swan of Irish letters.

Ussher's writing is brilliant. It is at once incisive and rich in allusion. His wit is surrealist with a French clarity; it explodes and hits the mark; on the other hand he occasionally tends to analyse in terms of capitalised and lumbering Teutonic abstracts.

The essays, which are arranged chronologically and dated between 1938 and 1946, are, in effect, an examination of the moral and philosophical problem of modern Europe. The dating is valuable, in so far as it helps to show where apparent inconsistency is the result of a mood induced by contemporary events. Not that Ussher makes a fetish of consistency. In ways he is even a conscious eclectic. He is, in fact, a skirmisher; and his guerilla tactics are learned from so many rebels and directed against so many regimes, that it is difficult to determine his loyalties. In a book that is fundamentally and intelligently serious, there is much that is merely brilliant playacting with words and conceits. Thus, in another context, his penetrating national characterisations would be valuable as they certainly are amusing; in this, they suggest the strategist who is concerned with the uniforms of the opposing armies.

These preoccupations obscure the unity of the problem. When he says: "The German is perpetually tortured by his lack of 'wholeness,'" he obscures the fact that this is the disease of every post-Humanist society; and is expressed not only in the exaggerations of Nietzsche, Marx and Freud, seeking a basis for integration in the Will, the negation of will and the libido; but in D. H. Lawrence, American energeticism, French surrealism and a variety of still potent nationalisms. Kierkegaard's "I *am* in so far as I realise my infinite and anguishing distance from the Infinite Whole," is merely the Lutheran version, which, having rejected Humanism with its manifold attempts at integration, and its disastrous postulate of an imminent integration "on terms"; further rejects the unrationalised integration in a mystical *agape* to accept the inevitability of *accidia* as the human norm. Existentialism, as I understand it, also seeks integration through a negative: "I am because there exists that which is not me"; and terrified of the tyranny of an unrelated dialectic, adopts, in Ussher's phrase, "a conscious, histrionic Stoicism."

Ussher is an Existentialist in this, that he suffers in himself the manifold oppositions of humanism. The difficulty is, not that these are all false; but that they are all partially true; not that they are all evil; but that they are all aspects of good. One need not be a doctrinaire Marxist to realise the truth of dialectical materialism; nor yet a Hegelian to know that it does not solve all the problems. Nietzsche is not the answer to Marx since both are aspects of the same disintegration. The energeticist pseudo-philosophies have never realised that totalitarianism, in any of its forms, is at once the final expression, and the ultimate negation of, individualism; that the individual and the mass are both essentially antagonistic and essentially complementary.

Here and there throughout the book there are echoes of the Spenglerian pessimism, and, in other moods, an answer in terms of Nietzschean Vitalism; though the author would live tastefully rather than dangerously. There is also a hankering after a kind of benevolent Toryism in which the elect might cultivate a quiet

agnosticism while retaining the forms of religion. But these are the accidents rather than the essence of his thought, and their expression, a gesture, like Rousseau's, of *Il faut être soi*. On the other hand there are certain phrases, which, linked and related, show the writer moving towards a very different attitude.

" . . . the rediscovery of Evil, as the principle of gravitation in human life, is giving back to philosophy a sense of tension, of *architecture*. . . ."

" For we must admit today that the idealist answer was a wrong one—disastrous in divorce from that Self-knowledge in which pre-Renaissance man guarded the tradition of an aboriginal guilt."

" And Christian theology has felt rightly that there is a third *numen*, which is neither Tradition nor Change, but that Mediator between all extremes which can best be called Tact. . . ."

Here we have an attempt to overcome the modern despair by discarding the Humanist belief in the secular perfectibility of man and society. Under Humanism dialectical movement was seen in relation to a state imminent in time, an immediacy which rendered it incapable of understanding the cry *O felix culpa—O certe necessarium Adae peccatum*, possible only to a philosophy which could relate its dialectic to infinity—the *felix culpa* being the very antithesis of Gide's *crime gratuit*. Ussher, it seems to me, is wrong in defining his " Tact " as " form which is an equilibrium of all forces." It is rather an attitude which sees no equilibrium this side of infinity in which is the final resolution of the dialectic, anarchy in the conformity of all existence to law. Such a view of the dialectic would obviate the multiple tyrannies which result from the belief that it is possible to establish absolutes in time; for, in the words of Pascal " La Tyrannie est de vouloir avoir par une voie ce qu'on ne peut avoir que par une autre." But whether this " Tact " is achievable without religion is another matter. Or can we have a hypothetical Infinity without God ?

Any review within such short limits could not but fail to do justice to this book. Each essay is packed with ideas, stimulating, suggestive and often provocative. If I have, perhaps, overemphasised a certain lack of unity; it must not be taken that I do not recognise the honest and searching intelligence underlying Ussher's examination of the modern problem.

EDWARD SHEEHY.

STUDIES IN LITERARY MODES. By Arthur Melville Clarke, M.A., D.Phil. Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London. 15s. net.

I find it difficult to assess the exact value of a book of this kind: it is obviously written from the point of view of a teacher, akin to those guides to good writing which we were all handed in our youth, those " Elements of Rhetoric," those " Principles of English Composition," which never seemed to be of the least practical use but merely made one feel a little like M. Jourdain, astonished that one could actually compose, when it was made to seem such a complicated undertaking, full of perils and pitfalls. But Mr. Clarke's book contains so much of judicious learning, curious information, good quotation that it almost disarms the prejudice with which one approached him. How diverting to find on one page Dr. Johnson's " the mind is refrigerated by interruption," on another Pascal's " It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. This, then,



is 'faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason," on yet another Sir John Beaumont's approval of rime:—

" In every language now in Europe spoken,  
By nations which the Roman Empire broke,  
The relish of the Muse consists in rime,  
One verse must meet another like a chime," etc.

Nevertheless the essential flaw in this kind of writing about writing remains—it must necessarily look only along the surface of the subject; it must see the activity of writing as a social activity: and I find myself in irritated disagreement with such remarks as—" It is in the recording of human differences that the interest of the novel resides; for manners are its chief ingredient and they are always changing and those other things which may be alike very deep down are of value and interest only as they differ on their surfaces from man to man and from age to age." When I read that " the usual definition of irony is:—' A mode of speech or writing, the meaning of which is contrary to the literal sense of the words,' " I remember what Bergson has to say on the subject and am astonished at such naïve superficiality. But I am more than astonished, I am angered by such hoaxes as—" Therefore I suggest that the most elementary function of rhetoric is not to persuade but to select and arrange," because to describe one " literary mode " by something fundamental to all kinds of writing appears to me as little less than cheating—it is an arousing of expectation only to disappoint it. Sometimes even details of style cause me dismay. I cannot think the use of such a word as " essentiality " ever necessary, and surely in a book which is devoted to modes and manners the author's own surface ought not to be spoiled by such a blot.

LORNA REYNOLDS.

A SWORD IN THE DESERT. By Herbert Palmer. Harrap, 6s.

In his preface Mr. Palmer tells us that he has passed his sixty-sixth year and that there is a probability that this will be his last book of poems; and so he makes here " a tentative declaration of faith " under the title " The Present State of English Poetry." He has always been a fighter and found himself, in the years since the first world war, always in bitter conflict with the poets of the prevailing fashion, beginning with the Georgians. " It seems comparatively easy," he says, " for a verse-writer to arouse curiosity and get his books into a sufficient number of libraries and bookshops if he be a prominent member of a literary clique. But it is not always pleasurable or possible to run in such harness, and the most free in mind hold themselves aloof." Well, for him it was neither pleasurable nor possible and, like Yeats's hawk, he has declared

" I will not be clapped in a hood,  
Nor a cage, nor light upon wrist. . . "

Indeed that fine early sonnet " Ishmael " might almost be called " Self-portrait," especially now that its defiant prophecy of ultimate triumph begins to be vindicated. For that very thing in his nature which drove him into the wilderness is the foundation of his poetry. Conflict is the basis of his work, the spring of its tremendous vitality—conflict between the lean and the fat, society and the individual, tyrant and rebellious slave, and ultimately and always

between good and evil, God and the Devil. In his medieval sense of the reality of sin, as in his fierce individuality, he shakes hands with Villon (whose life he has finely dramatised in "The Judgment of Francois Villon") and, in his susceptibility to direct inspiration and his familiar intercourse with spirits of Good and Evil, he sits by the side of Blake.

In all his years of fierce personal devotion he has tried to interpose himself between the body of Poetry and the attacks of perversity, wilful obscurity and undisciplined symbolism. For him Poetry is, first and foremost, song; "it must have shape, vitality, melody" and "it must pass the oral test." All his own best work has had the qualities he demands from others and they will be found again in "A Sword in The Desert." The book is divided into three sections: "Fire and Song," "Bonfire and Cinders," and "Dance-song and Barrel-organ," and with the opening poem we have immediately the authentic note, the quality of incantation, in which he excels, even if there is no poem here with quite the wild Tom o' Bedlam magic of "The Witch" or the "Denunciatory Ode." Magic there is, though, and it lurks in some of the fiercely, joyously satirical poems of the second section. Palmer's satirical force has not lessened with the years; it has, if anything, increased, but it has ripened in such a way that the element of genuine mellow humour now makes its malice doubly enjoyable. He is at his deadliest perhaps in "Ferretings and Faces," but humour, magic, melody, all make "The Table-caterwaul: 1936-39" (in which the cat of criticism falls insane) as pleasant and nasty as the naughty mind of man can desire. Here are a few lines:

"No more, no more, shall taunt, shall taunt no more!  
For I shall speak and drivel and adore,  
Although they only strained in imitation  
Of larks I always thought above my station.  
But Honesty is not for such as I,  
And Conscience is an awful stinging fly,  
And both must be suppressed, or I shall die,  
Suppressed, suppressed, or I shall die, shall die."

Among the finest poems in this book are the delicate and tender "Abelard sings his Love to Helöise," the ecstatic hymn "Prayer for Sunlight in Early Spring" and "Christmas Signs: St. Alban's, 1941" which readers of this magazine will remember. Some of the poems most directly inspired by the war seem to suffer through the suppression of individuality by the weight of popular sentiment, but this is inevitable in a poet so unaffected, so intensely human, so "un-neutral." Herbert Palmer, indeed, could not be so important a poet as he is if there were not great inequalities in his work, inequalities expressive of that duality of understanding and experience suggested by so many of his titles. When he is truly inspired, when he really sings, he writes as no other poet of our time can write, and at any moment there may come the sudden impact of the miraculous, the inevitable line. When he strikes "the strings of the zither he stole when he played with the angels in Zion" that strange thing happens to the listener which occurs only at the sound of great verse. And one knows that the "green candle in the dark passage to eternity" of which he wrote in "The Mistletoe Child" has in truth been lit.

W.P.M.

THE ROAD OF EXCESS. By Terence de Vere White. (Brown and Nolan. 15/-).

Mr. Terence de Vere White has written a full and timely biography of Isaac Butt, first leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The searchlight of history has been directed on the brilliant and tragic figure of his successor to leadership, Charles Stuart Parnell. Laurels in O'Connell St. and oratory at Avondale greeted the Parnell Centenary while Butt has remained in the shadows.

This volume—written with knowledge and grace—may help to give Isaac Butt a larger place in the memory of his countrymen. Here, against the spacious background of nineteenth century Ireland, we meet many eminent men—Dan O'Connell, Mitchel, Thomas Davis, Smith O'Brien, Kickham, Parnell. It is noticeable that Isaac Butt stands out among them without suffering any diminution of stature.

What I found most impressive in this story was the way in which he spent himself in the courts defending leaders of insurgent Ireland after the bitterness of the Famine days. Here is a man with many faults but with that indefinable atmosphere of nobility about him. He did not agree with Mitchel and the others but he knew why they acted as they did and his heart was never shut to the claims of humanity. It was his generous stand for the prosecuted National leaders that first won him a place in the affections of the people.

Earlier, as a rising young Tory lawyer, he had crossed swords with O'Connell in the Dublin Corporation. Even then—thirty years before the event—O'Connell had the shrewdness to see and to say that Butt would one day take his place in the National movement. And a journal of the period referred to Butt as “the Protestant O'Connell.”

Butt entered Trinity College at the age of fifteen, in 1828. His career there almost came to an abrupt end when—in a fit of youthful boisterousness—he walked round the college courtyard smashing the lamps with his walking stick. Realising the gravity of his offence he decided to pack his bags for flight to Oxford before he was blacklisted there. But he was discovered and hauled before the board. He was saved from expulsion by a Senior Fellow who pleaded that a boy of his age who could extemporaneously translate Sallust should not be driven out. If only he had retained a little of that boisterous spirit fifty years later, when he led the Irish Party at Westminster he might have held the leadership longer.

Mr. de Vere White is able to evoke the atmosphere of the period as, for example, when he describes the nine night's debate on theological matters held in the Rotunda between the Rev. Tresham Gregg and Fr. Maguire. This was a nine day's wonder.

“On the ninth day the chairman agreed that the discussions should end. Their tone had deteriorated as time went on and it seemed that they might be interminable. At the close of the debate, ‘the Rev. Mr. Gregg mounted the table, standing like the Colossus of Rhodes astride over his voluminous collection of Tomes, and unfurling the largest of his apostolical maps, he twirled it around his head, and shouted most stentoriously, *Victoria, Victoria—see how they run!* His appearance outside was greeted with hisses and groans, accompanied by that most inharmonious of all sounds—the braying of an ass’.”

Nowhere but in Dublin could such a scene be possible and it helps to explain Butt's violent partisanship in the welter of sectarian conflict. Then

came the famine of 1847. Butt had held the Whately Professorship in Economics since the age of 23. As an economic student he knew that Ireland was an undeveloped country and his writings to that effect had been quoted by his Nationalist opponents. Both as an economist and a humanitarian he was indignant at the refusal to help the famine victims.

When the Young Ireland leaders were indicted in 1848, Butt was a powerful advocate in the courts. Although he did not share their opinions he knew that sensitive minds could find good reason for bitterness. These cases were not profitable and his old Unionist friends drew back. He suffered imprisonment for debt for a lengthy period. Later he practised in the London courts more profitably. But his extravagances and follies swallowed up his fees. It is from this phase of his life and from the saying of William Blake—" *The Road of Excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom* "—that the title of the book was taken. It is not very apt for Butt's road only led him to Westminster.

Before he created the Home Rule Party, Butt came back to Dublin to defend the Fenian prisoners in the courts. He built up the Home Rule Party when he was turned sixty and his powers were failing. His earlier work in the courts probably inclined him to regard Parliament as a court to be persuaded rather than a sounding board to be thumped. But here is his story told well, in relation to the tendencies, struggles and tragedies of his time.

R. M. F.

THE MINT. Edited by Geoffrey Grigson. Routledge. 8s. 6d.

FRUIT FROM SATURN. By Yvan Goll. Hemispheres Editions (New York) \$2.00.

MILK OF PARADISE. By Forrest Reid. Faber & Faber. 6s.

CLAY SPEAKS OF THE FIRE. By Edmund Lobo. Williams & Norgate. 6s.

POEMS FROM INDIA. Edited by R. N. Currey & R. V. Gibson. Oxford University Press. 8s. 6d.

"The Mint" is a new miscellany of literature, art and criticism. Mr. Grigson, in a foreword, expresses his high conception of an editor's duty and, let it be said at once, the contents of "The Mint" themselves would declare his belief even without the foreword. Neither eclectic nor commonplace, neither pedantic nor unlearned, this miscellany provides something of "serious entertainment" for readers of widely different interests. Mere mention of a few of its items will suggest its scope and variety. There is a long article, authoritative, unaffected and excellently illustrated, on "The Architecture of Mannerism" by Nikolaus Pevsner; a typical autobiographical fragment by Séan O'Casey; a sensitively written and suggestive short story "Rain in the Heart" by the American, Peter Taylor. Rhys Davies contributes an account (which one would like to see deepened and expanded) of Dr. William Price, the friend and champion of the early Welsh miners, with his scandalous eccentricities, his unashamed free-love, his attempts to reinstate the druidic past even while his medical practice was in advance of his time, his victorious battle for cremation. The Editor's note on the poetry of William Barnes may help to deliver a fine poet from near oblivion and has already inspired a leading article in "The Times Literary Supplement." The countless students at present writing theses on the work of Yeats will find that Professor Hauserman's "W. B. Yeats's Idea of Shelley" does, as its author suggests, contribute more to our knowledge of Yeats than of Shelly, but is not the less interesting for that. There



are poems by W. H. Auden, Geoffrey Matthews, W. J. Turner and E. J. Scovell, and a selection from the unpublished poems and fragments of John Clare. Other items range from Owen Barfield's "The Psalms of David" to James J. Farrell's "The Language of Holywood." It is good to know that "The Mint" will appear from time to time and that in this "age of the journalist and the publicity agent and the thousand-word article . . . contributions need not be short and they will not be censored."

Mr. Grigson's complaint of paper difficulties for his kind of writing comes to mind when one surveys Mr. Yvan Goll's "Fruit from Saturn." Expensively, not to say extravagantly, produced, this book contains about three hundred lines of "verse" and five illustrations in its fifty-odd pages. There may be merits for the initiated in this pretentious jargon beyond the present reviewer's comprehensions. But let Mr. Goll speak for himself. Here he is when he is being lucid:—

Atomic deity  
Bombard my heart at will  
With neutrons of your truth  
Transform my eyes to yellow nitric stars. . . .  
Here, more subtle and elusive, he begins his "Lilith":  
Bird-woman of the ultra-world  
The Algol of your eyes  
Rotating at high dementia. . . .

It is very pleasant to turn from this desert of symbolism gone daft to Forrest Reid's cool, green domain of sanity and imaginative reason. Reid is one of the living masters of English prose and here, chatting, as it were, over his loves in poetry, all his ease of manner, the apparently effortless clarity with which he says just what he wants to say, is put to delightful use. Disarmed at once by his denial of systematic or academic or didactic purpose, one leans back to listen to this statement of personal preferences, as he passes from one to another of the flowers of the romantic poetry he loves. In that strangely beautiful autobiography of childhood "Apostate" he wrote "The kind of poetry I like best now I liked then," and the twenty years since that was written have found him still looking for the three qualities in poetry which appealed to him in his boyhood—"tune, pictures (by which I meant imagery) and a third nameless quality which I should now describe as an atmosphere of fantasy. . . ." Blake and Coleridge are, perhaps, his favourites, but he finds what he wants, with greater or less frequency, in Tennyson, Poe, Morris, Vaughan, Herrick, Sydney Dobell, Yeats, de la Mare and many more. There is an unaffected charm in his use of the familiar in illustration and a peculiar pleasure in being reminded, with gentle insistence, how strange and wonderful these known things really are.

Plenty of hard thinking underlies Mr. Lobo's practised handling of a variety of metres. He often achieves felicity of expression and all his work has emotional sincerity. He is at his best when he sings most naturally for when he deliberately deepens the meaning of his verse it is with too apparent aim and effort. The title poem "Clay Speaks of The Fire" is memorable.

The Indian edition of "Poems from India" has already been reviewed in this magazine and a re-reading of its contents in the English edition confirms the opinion that this is an exceptionally fine collection. The English edition

with its stiff cloth cover and fresh page to each title is much handsomer than the issue for India, but one does miss William H. Blackburn's illustrations.

W.P.M.

VILLON, BALLADES, French and English. Selected by André Deutsch and Mervyn Savill. Allan Wingate, 8s. 6d. net.

The obstacles which beset the translator of Villon are formidable. There is the language, which in itself is difficult enough, apart from the recurrent *jargon* or slang. The poems are crammed with topical and local allusions, which are often incomprehensible to a modern translator, armed though he may be with all the available commentaries. Then again, Villon employed the most rigid and complicated verse forms, the Ballade, the Double Ballade, and the Rondeau, and although he, because he was a genius, succeeded in expressing through the medium of his own highly personal vision, the heights and depths of the human soul, with spontaneity and particularisation, in spite of the limited rhymes and enforced repetitions; the pitfalls which lie about the path of the would-be translator are all too obvious. For even if he conquers the almost insuperable technical hazards, he has still to put life into his renderings of poems ablaze with reality and bitter sincerity, and to achieve this he must grasp intuitively the poet's far from simple nature. Although Villon shares the profundity, passion, and imagination of the greatest poets, his own highly idiosyncratic temperament is evident in every word he writes. The duality of his activities as accomplished scholar and unscrupulous criminal is but one aspect of the other contradictions implicit in his strange disposition, in which sorrow mingled with mockery, gaiety with despair, and tough sensuality with the most tender compassion.

"Je ris en pleurs, et attens sans espoir."

The "Ballade Villon" is the most complete and subtle revelation of a poet's personality, which moves the heart and fascinates the mind of the reader aware of its implications.

To the translators in this volume, often poets in their own right, such as Rossetti and Swinburne and Richard Aldington, "the fascination of what's difficult" would seem to have been irresistible. Although the level throughout both of poetry and technique is a high one, some of the contributors, notably William Stirling and John Heron Lepper capture the spirit of Villon better than others. Swinburne and Rossetti remain obstinately themselves and the less Villon. The quality of William Stirling's work recalls that of Dunbar, the fifteenth century Scotch poet, who wrote the superb "Lament for the Makars" with its haunting refrain "Timor Mortis Conturbat Me"; a poem which in its obsession with mortality, and the tragic swiftness with which old age and death overtake beauty, fortune, and renown, has a great resemblance to Villon's poems on the same subject. Had it been possible for Dunbar to translate his great contemporary his would have been the most perfect version of all.

It would be hard to imagine a better rendering of "Les Regrets de la vieille Héaulmière" than that by John Heron Lepper, which in its profoundly moving subject and particularised treatment, has always seemed to me one of the greatest poems of all time, and one which pervades, and lingers in the reader's mind, effecting that catharsis which the Greeks considered to be the function of tragic art. John Payne is another fine translator and deserves con-

gratulation on the skill he displays in dealing with one of Villon's most magnificently plangent catalogues of antique names in the Ballade "Contre les Mesdisans de la France."

The compilers might with advantage have included some of Andrew Lang's work which has more vitality than Stacpoole's; and those readers of the "Dublin Magazine" who are familiar with the sensitive and musical renderings by Michael Scot will regret that they are not represented here.

A beautiful book, and one which will give many readers a new insight into some of the greatest poetry of France. Large octavo in format, it is fastidiously produced, and, embellished with well-chosen mediaeval wood-cuts.

MONA GOODEN.

A SUMMER DAY AND OTHER STORIES. By Kate Roberts, Cardiff. Penmark Press Ltd., 7s. 6d. net.

Kate Roberts is a Welsh writer whose short stories are here translated and offered to the English reader as the "first representative volume of her work." In a generous foreword, Storm Jameson tells us that since 1925, when she published her first collection, the author has been accepted by readers of her language as a great artist. This seems to me praise used in a rather reckless fashion. I do not know whether in Welsh her achievement is unique, but certainly judging her stories as they stand in English, it is an exaggeration to call the writer "great." Not that I wish to suggest that she is without talent. She knows how to use words, and she sees the external world with a fresh and clear eye. Look, for instance at this—"The moon was running swiftly over a blue background, behind loose thin clouds which hung in the air like the wool of a sheep after going through a quickset hedge" or at this—"Down there by Plas Bowman the wind took my frock as it takes a sheet on the line, and the silk clacked like the wings of a bird. It carried me up and away, over the quay and into the sea."

But to write of human beings something more is wanted; it is not enough to record, to report, to be "objective." Admittedly the short story is a difficult medium; one must by compression, by economy do what in the novel one has the leisure to do at length, with complexity, with elaboration; but, in spite of the difficulties, one's characters must reveal themselves as forces of nature, growing mysteriously from within, as in Turgeneff's *A Lear of the Steppes*, for instance. This I do not think Miss Roberts can do. Her stories make the impression on me of being half-fabricated, the characters of being half-manipulated; there sometimes appear to be failures of imagination, as in the first story, with the last lines of the old man's reflection on the death of the girl who had been his love, and because of whose loss his life had been a barren empty thing; sometimes failures in technique, as in the story called *Between two pieces of Toffee*, where the narrative is unfolded through the device of an old man remembering his youth; and at one point the author wrongly interposes her own person, making an observation that could not have come from him:—"And on that day, because May Fair was nearing, he asked her when they would be wed. *Since they were both stooping, he did not see the shadow which crossed her face as he asked this.*"

There is no doubt, however, about the sombre sincerity of Miss Roberts' stories, and taken collectively they make the impression of authentic experience.

She tells the short and simple annals of the poor, of the terrible inevitably of narrow lives, the single chance of happiness, which once missed is never again to recur, the monotonous round of existence, lived for the most part without self-consciousness, but now and again waking to blundering reflection, becoming aware of its own restriction and pitifulness. To say that the final effect, the feeling left with one is of a stifled sympathy is merely to say, I suppose, that this is not writing of a nature to bring one that catharsis of emotion, that release which the greatest art affords.

LORNA REYNOLDS.

## TWO NOVELS.

THE HOUSE IN CLEWE STREET. By Mary Lavin. (Michael Joseph. 10/6d.).  
AND THE COCK CREW. By Fionn Mac Colla. (Maclellan. 8/6d.).

Miss Lavin's short stories, in the two books I have seen, are noticeably compact. What she has to say, is said in a manner all her own, and her own manner is remarkable and fluent and just right for her material. If she has her failures, they are failures of atmosphere, rather than craft, an attempt, I think, to shuffle the different strata of the country town, rather than deal with it as it is.

I think it is this same error of temperature that makes her long novel, "The House in Clewe Street," a failure. For a failure it is. And I say that with regrets. I have put the book aside again and again, thinking that my own mood might be responsible, but now after a long time I have read it in a couple of long nights, and while there was plenty of stuff in the book to keep me from being bored, there wasn't enough in it to keep a whet on my appetite.

The business of any novelist is not just entertainment, however; it is not even quickness of pace. But invention does play its part, and if the scene is in Ireland, I must find things in it that touch me, as they would touch me in any kind of mirror, no matter how distorted. The distortion is the artist's personal problem, and the art lies in making the distortion credible. Mary Lavin is realistic enough, so she is not by any means incredible. And yet, and yet! I put the book down, marvelling why the economy of the short story has not been transferred to the larger canvas. The quick chalk that suited her so well, the half-vacant background that was so full of hints, they are all overlaid here with an incredible and laborious painting that hides more than it reveals.

"And the Cock Crew" has its moments. And the moments might be regarded as sudden insights into the puritan mind when it was in the making, and when Scotland, under its hectoring eye, was in the re-making, with big business busy as its bed-fellow. In Ireland we are apt to see a political design behind our own land troubles. We overlook that Scotland had its Clearances too, and that people were burned out and driven from their homes and their townlands when animals became more important as a marketable commodity than men.

This novel is piercing and drab and very obstinate. MacColla set out to do a cold nasty job, and he does it very well. Had it more sophistication, it would lose, probably, the most of its stone-like passion. But it has that authentic ring that is terrible and sad and one only regrets that one's pity is called upon so often in our own day, that there is very little to spare for what is past.

PADRAIC FALLON.



FANTASTIC SUMMER. By Dorothy Macardle. Peter Davies. 8s. 6d.

In an earlier book, *Uneasy Freehold*, Dorothy Macardle told the story of a haunted house. This time she has chosen a far more difficult theme—the story of a haunted mind.

Even without the foreword which assures us this is not fiction but fact, Miss Macardle writes with such sincerity that Virgilia, with her unwanted gift of second sight, her artist daughter Nan who works in London, the old servant Brigid, must be accepted as realities, not fancies. The tinkers and medical friends hovering on the outskirts are not so convincing and Carlo, the villain of the book, is slightly melodramatic. Though the story has incident, suspense, climax, the real interest of the book lies in Glencree itself. Like few other modern romantic novelists Dorothy Macardle makes her setting as alive as her characters. She evokes the spirit of the glen lying beyond the Featherbed, with its wild beauty belonging more to the west than to the east. The birds of Glencree, the streams and woods, their misty light and changing colours, the hills rising beyond, make a background of beauty to this story of a troubled mind. Those who read the book will long to see its setting and search for the delightful house where Virgilia lived. *Fantastic Summer* should make an even better film than *Uneasy Freehold*.

PATRICIA LYNCH.

WAR BY THE IRISH. By John McCann. The Kerryman. 10s. 6d.

Although the literature of the Irish Revolution grows more formidable each year this book occupies a special niche, as indeed Mr. Oscar Traynor, Minister for Defence, points out in the foreword when he says that "the author has brought vividly before us many of those episodes of our recent history which, linked together, forged for us our emancipation." Mr. McCann, himself, with disarming modesty, does not claim to have written a history of the period but has aimed at recording incidents and episodes of the National struggle during the stormy years from 1916 to 1921.

Many of the incidents narrated here belong to the living tradition of the struggle. Now they have been given the permanence—and the dignity—of print. A book dependent upon the memories and impressions of fighting men is bound to have a tinge of haziness. Things seen through the drifting smoke of battle assume various shapes. It is a measure of the author's skill and judgment that, though he covers a wide field, he gives us precise detail and a firm general outline. Future historians no less than present-day readers owe a debt to Mr. John McCann. Yet it is surely a slip—in writing of MacNeill's countermand of the 1916 mobilisation to say (on p. 36) that, "Later Eoin MacNeill sent orders for the country to rise. Too late." The whole point about MacNeill's countermand was that after some vacillation he came to the firm conclusion that he was doing the right thing to call off the Rising and so would not alter his decision.

In no other single volume—to my knowledge—has there been so much detailed description of what happened in the country generally during the years of conflict. This gives a fullness to the book. Yet events in Dublin are not neglected. It is quite evident that civic pride as well as national feeling went to the making of this record, for the author is one of Dublin's leading citizens. A striking feature is the number of contemporary photographs—over fifty—which

accompany and illustrate the text. Typical of these is the gay picture of the Countess Markievicz being welcomed by the city on her release from prison after the 1916 Rising.

R. M. F.

BRITISH MILITARISM AS I HAVE KNOWN IT. By Hanna Sheehy Skeffington. *The Kerryman*. 6d.

The murder of Francis Sheehy Skeffington at Portobello barracks in 1916, was completely indefensible and this booklet—by his widow—gives the whole story as she told it in her lectures in the United States. Also, incidentally, it conveys the very clear impression of an intrepid woman who could not be bribed or bullied into silence. Had Mrs. Skeffington cared to accept the compensation offered by Mr. Asquith she would have been a rich woman; had she agreed to say nothing, her way would have been made smooth. But she regarded it as her duty to tell the truth to the world. How she did it is recounted here. Sir Francis Vane—a British officer—put himself on her side and a hitherto unpublished letter written by him is included in this fifth reprint of the booklet. In the foreword—written not long before she died—Hanna Sheehy Skeffington says that what impressed her most was not the shooting of her pacifist husband or the subsequent violent raids on her home but the persistent efforts of the whole official machinery to prevent the truth from becoming known. Yet she was even more determined. So the world listened to her story. We should not allow the tragedy of that story to overshadow the character of the teller which gave her the victory.

R. M. F.

POEMS. By Thomas G. Keller. (Dublin. Printed privately. 150 copies).

Those who knew the late Thomas Keller will not expect a poetry of sensation, or action, or even liveliness. His interests were outside the everyday, his inspiration came from the byepaths of religious feeling, where art is used as a sort of notation of God. He wouldn't have liked this last expression, he would have considered it too pretentious, for he was, above everything else, an extremely humble man.

Only those who knew him well were aware that he published poetry as far back as 1905, the occasion being a little book in which A.E. printed selections from the work of such poets as Seamus O'Sullivan, Padraic Colum, and others, and that a book under his own name came out later as one of the famous Tower Press Booklets under the title "Songs of a Devotee."

A background like this lends itself to sober verse, for all the cerebral excitements are avoided like a sensual temptation. It is not my kind of poetry, particularly, but I keep seeking my friend through his verse. He was derivative, but having his real origin in his own sincerity, he forced some of his personality through into verse-form. Take this little thing he calls AUTUMN.

O Season of the soft reluctant leaves  
That seek their last repose on earth's cold breast,  
O let me hear the sorrows of thy voice  
Calling all things to loveliness and rest,

In thy soft clouds grown grey with misery,  
 Thy desolate branches flaunting the gaunt skies,  
 Surely there dwells a sweetness of despair  
 For lonely hearts and weary tear-stained eyes.

For dumbly dressed, in sober light arrayed  
 Breathing a sudden mystery and fear,  
 The pomps and pageants of eternity  
 Loom through the withering ritual of the year.

I don't know why I like this. It is not the kind of speech that sets things singing in me. It is not even personal, and its poise is a conventional poise; and still, behind it, I sense the man, the man who made his problems more than man-size so that they could solve themselves in eternity. It is not our kind of language, I say, but we can give no reason why it should be less valid, just as we can give no real reason why we avoid the word GOD in our verse, and are very sparing in making any kind of personal address to the Deity. And on that account, and because to Keller this large utterance was sincere and necessary, I will avoid quotation of less personal stuff, and end by quoting in full a little poem he calls MEA CULPA.

I have made a veil of sin  
 To restrain the blazing light  
 Rushing from the throne where sits  
 God, the Lord of good and right.

And the white light as it pours  
 Through the veil, to my surprise,  
 Changes into radiant hues  
 Grateful to my human eyes.

Thus I for my follies plead,  
 Saying 'Can it evil be  
 That can turn his blinding rays  
 Into glory I can see?'

KATE GREENAWAY. By Anne Carroll Moore. Frederick Warne.

I have never been lucky enough to possess a Kate Greenaway book and the name has hitherto meant merely a pretty style for children at fancy dress parties. Yet Kate Greenaway was famous at the end of the last century and, seeing some of her enchanting pictures and verses in this book, her fame is quite understandable. There is one illustration to the Pied Piper, worthy of being taken out and framed, only that this would spoil the book. The rich colouring, the sureness and delicacy of the drawing are remarkable.

This thin volume of fifteen pages is not quite a children's book. It is an introduction to Kate Greenaway's own work, with specimens of her drawings and verse and a vague account of her life and times.

Kate Greenaway, says Miss Moore, had been designing Christmas cards and valentines for William Marcus Ward who told her that her verses were "rubbish

and without any poetic feeling." She accepted his opinion of her drawings and destroyed those he considered bad. But she went on writing verses until she had about fifty. She showed these and her drawings to Edmund Evans, who had published the toy books of Walter Crane, and he was delighted with them.

Evans printed a first edition of 20,000 at 6/- each of this, Kate Greenaway's first book *Under the Window*. It was reprinted until 7,000 had been sold. French and German editions brought the number up to 100,000 and apparently the book is selling still.

Sales are not always an indication of merit, but in those days of few books for children *Under the Window* was quite different in every way from any picture book that had been seen before. The rhymes, too, had a charm equal to the drawings.

This was in 1878, when Kate Greenaway was thirty-two, and her success continued. She became a contributor to well-known magazines, Ruskin was her friend and gave her advice, not always taken, on her drawings. Her work was so popular that imitations of her books had as big a sale as the originals. In these days the only picture books to equal hers are *Ferdinand the Bull* and the Bahar books, where the text and the pictures cannot be separated.

PATRICIA LYNCH.

"HAPPY DAYS" ESSAYS OF SORTS—E. OE. Somerville and Martin Ross. Longmans, Green and Co. 10s. 6d.

The second part of the title is an exact description of this book. Several of the essays, gathered from various magazines of many years back, reveal nostalgia for that limited world of huntin', fishin', shootin', whose boundaries have been almost obliterated. The really funny stage-Irish characters of the R. M. books have no place here though in "*Étaples, where the Irish R.M. began*" the author tells how they came into existence:—

"So we simmered Flurry Knox, and old Mrs. Knox, and the rest of the company, and became much attached to them in the process. One after the other of Major Sinclair Yeates' friends and neighbours came effortlessly to our call. It seemed as if we had always known them. I can truly say that in order to identify an actual representative of any of them, it would be necessary to tear each to pieces, and collecting the fragments, resume them into a sort of human ragbag."

The people in the essays are less real and interesting than the dogs and horses. But "*An American Horse-tamer*" is a good account of the "whisperer" John. S. Ravey, who, by whispering a secret spell into its ear, can charm even a half-crazy stallion determined on killing. The author, Dr. Somerville, who is also a talented artist, is most entertaining in her search for the Paris art studios of her youth. "*Some Spanish Impressions*" is a delightful sketch of a Spanish tour and, in the last two essays there is a description of hunting in England 50 years ago and in West Cork. The Irish hunters certainly gain by comparison.

Yet these scattered essays can hardly convey the quality of the authors of the sombre, brilliant "*The Real Charlotte*" and the R. M. stories. Perhaps the true value is in the illustrations by Dr. Somerville. Two of them, the frontispiece and "*The Long Bridge at Étaples*" are lovely.

PATRICIA LYNCH.



KIND COOKING. By Maura Laverty. The Kerryman. 7/6d. net.

In these days of almost universal food shortage, there can be no doubt of the great contribution made by good cooks to the health and happiness of mankind. Those, who like Mrs. Laverty, teach people how to become good cooks are really important personages, and play an important part in world reconstruction.

The authoress of "Kind Cookery" tells us that she was quite literally born in the kitchen, and with such a fortuitous beginning, in addition to a nature which combines exuberant enthusiasm, experimental curiosity and practical commonsense, it is not surprising that her book is both interesting and reliable. "Master the basic recipes, learn the rules which govern each branch of cookery" is the soundest possible advice for beginners. So many writers on cookery quite erroneously infer that their readers already know the reasons for the operations they must perform.

Mrs. Laverty is well read in culinary lore, and her researches range from Gerard's famous Herbal (1597) to Dr. Linklater's latest book on diet; she has also travelled widely, and her recipes from countries such as Sweden and Spain add colour and interest to her book. I wish she had brought back from Spain a recipe for that delicious sweet, Turron de Jijona, that some of the Spanish restaurants in London, before the war, used to serve as dessert. She might also with advantage have mentioned some method of dealing with that indigenous and rather magical wild fruit of Ireland, the fraughan, other than eating them off the bushes on the mountain side.

As I am reviewing this book in eggless, and practically meatless England, the chapters on fish and vegetables made a special appeal. Her Spanish methods of cooking the dull and despised cod, *A la Madrileña*, and of dealing with leeks, a somewhat overpowering vegetable when served plain, are particularly good.

Mrs. Laverty is chief cookery expert to Radio Eireann, and though I have not had the good fortune to hear her at the microphone, it is obvious from her book that she is an ideal broadcaster, for she combines a sound and comprehensive knowledge of her subject with a good-tempered, entertaining showmanship; enlivening her advice with merry, boisterous clowning, which must often make Irish kitchens ring with peals of responsive mirth. "Show me a woman who is easily bored and I'll show you a poor cook; show me a woman who is really interested in her fellow creatures and I'll show you a woman who can make an attractive meal out of a tin of bully beef." A basic aphorism indeed in the minor philosophy of domesticity.

MONA GOODEN.

THE MERMAID OF ZENNOR. By Eileen Molony. Edmund Ward. Leicester. 8s. 6d.

Cornwall is a great place for legends. Every village, every cove and creek on that indented shore has at least one and the people are not at all ashamed of them. Indeed they are inclined to boast of their mermaids, their fairy miners and threshers as much as of their pirates and smugglers. In the old days they had professional story-tellers—drolls—very like our shanachies, only the drolls wandered the countryside from house to house, telling stories in return for a night's board and lodging.

Eileén Molony has caught the lively spirit of the legends and of the drolls who told them. Sometimes she touches local history in the story of a Bristol plumber who invented a process for the manufacture of lead shot. The shot tower is still there, looking out over the Bristol Channel and Miss Molony has a way of suggesting that the mermaids and the knockers are also there. Hers is an understanding sympathy with Cornwall and its people.

She has one story about a mermaid who married a squire's son because of his beautiful voice and went to Church with him on Sunday, dressed in the latest fashion. At last they went away into the sea and were never seen again.

Of course there is the legend about the giant of St. Michael's Mount, but one of the most delightful is about little Bobby Griglans and Polly, who picked a four-leaved clover, so that she was able to see the Skillywiddons and make friends with Bobby, who was one of them.

The fairy widower and his cow who fed on lilies: the only woman in Zennor who knew why Grandfer Polruan spent so much time and trouble in carving the Merrymaid for the bench end on the back pew of the church; the knockers who helped the little mine worker; Casabianca, the cat of St. Ives, her friends the Spriggans and the painter who did a portrait of a Spriggan baby which made him famous—are all in this book. The traveller to Cornwall and those who have missed Cornwall should read it.

The quaint illustrations by Maise Meiklejohn, are a great addition to the stories.

PATRICIA LYNCH.

CAPTAIN BOYCOTT. By Philip Rooney. Talbot Press. 7s. 6d.

When Father O'Malley of Mayo intervened to prevent a direct physical action he coined the verb 'boycott' which at once became the popular definition for the strategy which several years earlier had been employed in the agitation for the remission of Tythes in the south and western counties. R. W. LeFanu mentions it in his "Seventy Years of Irish Life." It was Ostracisation 'sending to Coventry') of the principal oppressors, a silent and passive method of intimidation which under the direction of the Land League leaders became more effective than the promiscuous use of firearms against their bailiffs and other underlings, any one of whom could be replaced easily at will. Philip Rooney has built up a grand story around (not only about) a pivotal phase of the Land War. A lesser constructively imaginative mind would have developed his theme merely as an interesting chapter in national history, but here we have a pattern of factual accuracy and fictional romance. The excitements of political movement are restrained to keep pace with social and agrarian life in the Mayo of a hundred year ago, and martial activity is halted awhile here and there against a background of rural scenery. The central figure is the Earl of Erne's unhappy agent at Lough Mask; but outstanding from the strongly-drawn characters are Hugh Davin and Anne Killian. The story is colourful and convincing, and it is human—it shows what is good in the worst and bad in the best of those who were destined to give their support to either side in the conflict between determined forces.



